

FOURTH EDITION.

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BUT GUIDED BY LITTLE FOX, THE MULE HELD ON, STRUGGLING AGAINST THE STORM.

OR,

The Sailor Boy Wanderer.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "THE
SEA MARAUDER," "THE INDIAN PILOT,"
"WIZARD WILL," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

LEFT ALONE TO DIE.

A MAN stood upon a slight knoll, overlooking
a small camp upon the prairie.

It was but a temporary halting-place, evi-
dently, for there was a small wicky-up, or
shelter, beneath which some one was sleeping,
snugly wrapped up in blankets.

A couple of horses were lariatied out near by

upon the prairie, a fire was burning under the shelter of a tree, and the scene was a picturesque though lonely one.

Over the prairie horizon the moon was rising, and upon it the eyes of the man were fixed, with a far-away look, as though his thoughts were borne away thereby to other scenes.

He was a man of twenty-seven or eight, with a bearded, stern face, as the moon revealed it, and he was dressed in the garb of a frontiersman, and wore a belt of arms.

"Why I should hesitate I do not know, I am sure, for what is his life to me?"

"By his death I get that much more, in time, and get it I must and shall!"

"Yes, I will do it, for, after all, he may not die, though if I can have it believed that he is dead, it will gain the same point in the end."

So saying, the man went softly to the camp, took up the two saddles lying there, and carrying them out to the staked horses, saddled them.

Then he stood a moment, looking silently down upon the sleeping form under the brush shelter, and turning away, moved out upon the prairie, leading the two horses.

Gaining the distance of a hundred yards he mounted one of the horses, and leading the other, rode away.

Once he paused, half-turned his horse, as though to go back, but shaking his head he went on until he came to a rise in the prairie.

Once over the rise and the little clump of trees, beneath which slumbered the one he was deserting, would be shut out of sight, and involuntarily he turned for a last look.

"It is cruel; but then, my nature is cruel, and to gain riches I must sacrifice all that comes between me and success."

"Down conscience! down feeling! and let all memory of a bitter nature be buried!"

So saying he rode on, urging his horses into a gallop, and rapidly the sleeper was left behind.

Dreaming in peace, with no dread of treachery, no fear in his heart, the sleeper slept on through the night.

The moon crossed the heavens from horizon to horizon, yet the one who slumbered did not awaken.

At length the eastern skies grew rosy, and soon after the sun sent red rays upward as it neared the horizon.

A moment more and the huge ball of red fire, as it appeared to be, looked upon the face of the sleeper.

A smile crossed the face, a restless movement, and the sleeper was awake, and casting off the blankets sprung to his feet with a "Hallo! it's mornin'!"

And the one who uttered the words was no man, no youth nearing man's estate, but a mere child, almost a baby boy, for he was scarcely six years of age.

He was dressed in a tiny suit of buckskins, jacket and leggings, and wore a wolfskin cap, the tail hanging down his back, for he grabbed it and put it on the moment he awoke.

Moccasins were upon his feet, and his face and hands were nut-brown, as though he had been exposed to a life on the plains.

He glanced about him with a smile upon his handsome, childish face, as though looking for some one.

"Where's papa?" he said, as he saw no one near.

"Where's the ponies?" he asked, when he saw that they were nowhere in view.

He ran a few steps from the camp and looked about him; but not a human being was near, nothing to catch his eye other than the timber, the wicky-up and the blankets.

"Papa! oh, papa!"

His shrill voice rung through the motte, but no response came to him.

Again he called, and only silence around him.

"Papa has gone!" he cried, and the tears came into his eyes.

"Bad papa, to go away and leave poor little Fokie."

"Papa don't love Fox, to go and leave him."

"Maybe papa is dead, and bad In'yan kill him."

So saying, the deserted boy burst into tears, and throwing himself upon the ground he gave way to an abandon of grief.

"Poor Fokie! poor Fokie!" he moaned, in his despair.

"Fokie all alone, and if Fokie dies little sister will die too!"

"Oh! what can I do?"

The last was said more as a man would have uttered the words than a child, and he looked about him with strange intelligence in his expressive face for one so young.

Getting upon his feet once more, he saw a

remnant of the last night's supper, a broiled bird and some bread.

This he ate with seeming relish.

Then he felt better, and, as if he had made up his mind what he should do, he rolled up the blankets, upon one of which he had been sleeping, covered with the other, and hung them at his back.

His prairie training, slight as it had been, for only half a year before he had been brought from an elegant home in the East, had been of service to him, and he had the good sense to follow the trail left by the horses.

He could not believe that he had been deserted by the man he called father, and set it down in his mind that his protector had gotten lost in some way.

The trail of the two horses to the timber was plainly marked, as was that by which they had gone, and he knew which was the way to go.

"The ponies got loose, and papa has gone to hunt for them," he said, with childish reasoning.

To aid his father in finding him, if he came back to camp, the little boy made his trail as plain as possible.

A mile—two miles were passed over, and he had to stop for rest, as the blankets grew heavy on the shoulders of one so young.

But after a short rest he trudged on, his face wearing a worried look, while he constantly watched the sun, fearful that night was coming on.

Resting often, and walking when he could, he passed most of the day, and at last reached a stream of water, and upon the bank was a clump of timber, half an acre in size.

Dropping his blanket, he took a little tin cup that was fastened to his belt and drank the water greedily.

He had been all day following the trail of the two horses, and he saw where they had crossed the stream; but it was too deep for him to attempt it, and worn out, hungry and wretched, he dropped down upon the ground and began to cry.

A loud yelp not far away startled him, and he saw out upon the prairie a wolf, who had his eyes upon him.

It was growing dark, and the boy trembled with fear; but he saw a tree not far distant, with wide-spreading branches, and up this he quickly climbed.

Then, in between the branches he fastened one of the blankets, so as to form a kind of nest, rather than a seat, and getting into it he looked about him, awed at his surroundings.

Drawing the other blanket about him, he settled himself for the night, his tears no longer flowing, his thoughts wild and wandering, while awe filled his young heart as the darkness settled down and wolf after wolf came beneath his tree and raised their voices in a chorus of dismal howls.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAIF.

To even an old plainsman, the situation in the tree of the little deserted lad would have been a most disagreeable one; but to a boy of only a few years it was a situation of horror, sufficient to have turned his brain and maddened him.

The moon at last came up and was a relief to the boy, at first; but then its light enabled him to look down into the red jaws beneath, and see the glitter of the white teeth, and he closed his eyes to shut out the fearful sight.

The howling of the wolves was heard far and wide, and each moment there were new arrivals of the horrid brutes, until the poor boy saw more beneath the tree than he had believed there were in the world.

What might have been the result of a long night upon his young nerves, such as was threatened, with no hope that he could see for the morrow, it would be easy to tell; but suddenly a loud halloo was heard, and there was at once a deathlike silence among the pack.

A moment after a horseman came at a gallop toward the scene and the rattle of a revolver scattered the savage brutes upon every side.

"Ho, you red-mouthed devils! Get out, and let me see what game you have here!" cried the voice of a man as he rode toward the spot.

"Ho, is any one treed here?" he called out as he came nearer.

"Yes, sir, it's me."

The answer caused the horseman to draw rein as though he had been shot at.

"A child's voice!" he said in a tone of amazement.

Then he spurred forward and drew rein under the tree, and so that he could reach up to where the boy was.

But the wolves were savage and had not yet been driven off, and were creeping closer, so that he wheeled suddenly, and with revolver in each hand began a rapid fire.

Yelps of pain and fright followed, and the vicious brutes fled from the scene, leaving the brave horseman master of the situation, and a dozen of their number dead or wounded, as an evidence of his unerring aim.

Then the horseman returned to the tree, and reaching up his arms, said in a kindly tone:

"Come, little one, and let me know who you are, and don't be frightened any more, for the wolves have all gone."

The bright moonlight revealed to the strong man the buckskin-clad form of a miniature frontiersman, and he saw a bright, handsome, fearless face, though it was wan and white looking after all the boy had passed through.

"I'm little Fokie, sir, and I'm lost," was the reply.

"I should think so; but, how did you get lost?"

"I don't know, sir; I was on the prairie with papa, and I went to bed in camp, and when I woke up he was gone and I was all alone."

"My poor boy! What could have become of your father?"

"I don't know, sir; maybe the In'yans kilt him."

"I hope not, my boy; but, where was your camp?"

"Way yonder, sir, hundreds of miles, I guess, 'cause I walked all day long, and got to this river, and it was getting dark and I saw a wolf, and I climbed up the tree."

"And oh, they came after me, and I was so scared."

"You are so good to find poor little Fokie."

"What is your name, my boy?"

"Fox'e."

"And your father's name?"

"Papa."

"But he has another name."

"I 'spect so, sir; but I don't know."

"Where do you live?"

"Way off somewhere, sir; but I am lost now."

"When did you leave home?"

"Two days."

"And you came with your father?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you went to bed in camp and have not seen him since?"

"No, sir."

"Who else was with you?"

"Spanker and Dick."

"Who are they?"

"Papa's horse and my pony."

"And you left your mother at home?"

"Fokie hasn't got any mother."

"Poor boy; but there are others at your home?"

"Papa and Sis, and Uncle Dan, and Aunt Becky; that's all, sir."

"Well, my boy, you must not feel bad, for I'll take you home, if I can find where you live, and if not, you can be my boy, for there is no children at my home, and my wife will only be too glad to have me bring such a nice little fellow as you are back with me."

"Now I must hunt a camping-place, and you shall have a good supper."

So saying the horseman took the blankets from the tree, and with the boy on the saddle in front of him, rode toward a spot where he knew there was a good camping-place.

He soon found the locality, and there was a good spring near, with plenty of food for the fire.

The little waif was delighted, and forgetting his sorrows he ran about and picked up wood, and a cheerful log fire was soon blazing brightly.

"This is a place where I have often camped, Fokie, my boy, and you see there is a little brush cabin," and he pointed to a little shanty.

The man had a haversack of provisions with him, and, having lariatied out his horse, the two sat down to a supper which the waif enjoyed to his heart's content, while he chatted pleasantly the while to the great amusement of his new-found friend, who, however, saw that he was too young to remember just where he lived, while upon the name of his father he seemed sadly mixed.

After supper the borderman spread his own and the boy's blankets upon the floor of the little shanty, and throwing more wood upon the fire, so that it would not burn out before morning, the two lay down to sleep, and almost instantly the tired little waif was buried in deep slumber.

Listening to his breathing as he lay upon his arm, the kind-hearted man said:

"Sleep on, little one, and I'll not feel sorry if I do not find your father, for you have already grown very dear to me, poor little Waif of the Prairie that you are; and you'll find a place in my good wife's heart, too, I am very sure."

Hardly had he uttered the words, when the sharp crack of half a dozen rifles resounded through the bushes; then came the wild war-whoop of red-skins as they bounded forward from their hiding-place beyond the river-bank.

CHAPTER III.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

It was very evident that the borderman had been taken by surprise, for he had, seemingly, taken no extreme caution against a foe's attack.

Fortunately for him and the little waif, the Indians had fired at random, or that is, a log lying in the shadow of some bushes near the fire had the appearance of being a human form enveloped in a blanket.

The red-skins had seen the camp-fire light as they came up the stream, and they had approached it with the bank for a shelter.

They saw but one horse and one form, as they believed, so they were not cautious, as they otherwise would have been, for they were a score in number and felt their power.

So they sprung upon the bank, emptied their rifles into the log, and came dashing on with fearful war-cries.

The plainsman was a man of iron nerve.

He knew the prairies well, and was well acquainted with the deviltry of the Indian.

He was surprised, yes; but he did not lose his presence of mind, though awakened with death staring him in the face.

He quickly sprung to his feet, seized the little waif, and said in a low tone:

"Don't be frightened and cry out, for we are all right."

"Foxie ain't scared," was the plucky rejoinder, and the boy stood against the rear of the shanty where the plainsman had placed him.

Then to seize his Winchester and spring to the opening in the little shelter and pump out half a dozen shots was the work of an instant.

The Indians had just reached the log, which they supposed to be their dead enemy, when the first one fell under the fire of the plainsman.

Another dropped, a third was wounded, and the rest ran for shelter as quickly as they could, with the bullets flying about them.

It was a terrible surprise for the red-skins, and the plainsman took advantage of it, for he quickly tore an opening in the rear of the brush wall, and seizing the boy in his arms, darted toward his horse, which was but half a hundred feet away, staked out in an open space.

He had reached the side of the animal before he was discovered, and the waif was seated upon his bare back.

Then the lariat was cut with one slash of a knife, and the plainsman turned and once more began to fire rapidly.

The Indians who had broken cover were once more forced back, and ere they could rally and dash upon him, the brave man was upon the back of his horse and dashing away across the prairie.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the fearless little waif, as the horse bounded out upon the moonlit prairie.

"You are a brave one, my boy," the plainsman said, as he turned and glanced backward, at the same time shielding the boy wholly, for the bullets and arrows were flying after them, and the woods rung with the wild war-cries of the enraged red-skins.

"We have a good start, True Blue, and we won't mind them," said the plainsman, addressing his large and powerful horse.

The animal had struck into a steady and sweeping gallop, as though he knew just what was expected of him, and the little boy said:

"Poor horsie, to have to carry such a big load."

"He doesn't mind your weight, my boy, as you will see, if we are chased, and we will be, for I am sure those red-skins are mounted."

After a moment more the plainsman said:

"I felt it! there they come!" and as he spoke, out of the timber dashed one, then another, and thus on until a dozen red horsemen were in pursuit.

"We are out of range of their rifles and arrows, and it will take a swift horse to catch up with True Blue, while I think I can keep them from crowding," and the man spoke rather to himself than to the boy, but the latter took it as addressed to him, and said:

"Yes, sir, I ain't a bit scared with you to shoot and True Blue to run."

"Good papa, good True Blue."

The plainsman's face quivered with emotion, and he said, almost fiercely:

"Before they should harm a hair of your blessed head, my dear boy, I would be cut to pieces by them a dozen times, were it possible."

"Come, True Blue, that white mustang is out-footing you."

It was a thrilling scene, for the moon shone brightly down from a cloudless sky, and the prairie stretched away before the fugitives in a seemingly expanseless plain.

The noble horse was dashing along at an easy pace, that showed he was not doing his best, though running well, and his riders, the boy in front of the man, seemed not to weight him down.

The horse had no bridle or saddle, only the lariat about his neck, which had been cut in two to free him.

Then, a couple of hundred yards behind him was the first of his pursuers, a red-skin mounted upon a white horse.

In the rear, bunched together, were three others, and following them were nine others, stretched out in line according to the speed of their horses, or their humor in the chase.

Far behind was the dark background of timber, through which the camp-fire blazed cheerily, and here and there the waters of the winding stream, where the banks were low, could be seen glimmering in the moonlight.

"That white horse is a good one; but will he last?" said the plainsman, as he saw his nearest pursuer gaining rapidly.

As the bold red-skin still came on the plainsman muttered:

"Some young brave anxious to get my scalp."

"Very well, let him come on."

And nearer and nearer the white horse drew, until the plainsman saw that he was within easy range.

"There are thirteen of them and they must be shown that it is an unlucky number."

So saying he brought his Winchester around for use, drew rein suddenly, and the rifle fairly leaped to his shoulder.

The red-skin saw the act, and dropped low on the back of his horse, while he, at the same time fired an arrow he evidently had in readiness.

The rifle cracked, a yell followed, and the white horse bounded on without a rider, stopped, turned, and ran back toward his mates.

"Pease take dis out," said the boy.

"Great God! you are wounded, my boy," cried the plainsman in alarm, as he saw that the arrow had stuck in the boy's leg.

"Only the arrow, sir," was the plucky reply, and it was at once drawn out, for it had penetrated but an inch into the flesh, and once more True Blue was urged forward, while those nearest in chase sent a shower of arrows after the fugitives.

Holding the boy up, the plainsman examined the wound as best he could and said:

"You are a little man; does it hurt much?"

"It hurts, but I won't cry, for I want to be a big man."

"Bless you, my boy, you will be!" and then came the terrible thought through the man's mind:

"Good God! what if the arrow should be poisoned?"

"Ah! there is another bold fellow who wishes to try my aim, for he has mounted the white horse," and the fleet animal referred to was now once more gaining upon True Blue, with another red-skin upon his back.

"Come, True Blue, do your best for a while, and test the speed of that white horse, for if he gains on you when you try, he is a good one."

True Blue was now urged to his full speed, and willingly sprung forward, as though anxious to show his master just what he could do.

But a glance showed the plainsman two things and they were that the body of red-skins were being dropped very rapidly, while the white horse was gaining more readily than ever upon True Blue.

"That is a superb animal, and I wish I had him," muttered the plainsman.

Then he once more got his Winchester around for use, drew rein suddenly as before, threw the rifle to his shoulder and fired.

A yell broke from the lips of the red-skin, and yet he did not fall from the saddle; but the plainsman still kept his horse at a stand-still and fired again, and again.

The red-skin sprung from the back of the white horse, and yet the plainsman understood that he had done so to escape his fire, for he said:

"I think I nipped him first shot, but I was too anxious not to hit that white horse."

"Ha! the animal is loose, and comes on after me."

"I may have killed or severely wounded the red-skin, after all."

As he spoke, the white horse came swiftly on after True Blue, who was now at his speed once more.

"What luck, Fox, if we should capture the white horse?"

"I will give him to you, my boy."

"For my pony?" cried Foxie.

"Yes, my boy; he shall be yours, for here he is!"

The white horse now dashed directly alongside of True Blue, and reaching over, the plainsman captured him by seizing the bridle-rein.

The horse, however, seemed satisfied, and ran readily alongside of True Blue, while the plainsman looked back at his pursuers.

They had stopped where the last Indian had fallen from the white horse.

"By Jove! I guess I got him, Foxie, for I notice they have given up the chase."

"Now I can see to that wound of yours, for where you see that clump of trees there is a nice spring, and we will take a rest and find out what the red-skins intend to do."

The timber, hardly more than half a hundred trees, was reached, and the plainsman dressed the wound in the boy's leg, and which, for a man, would have been a slight affair; but the brave little fellow bore it well, and when they started on their way, insisted upon riding Snowball, as he named the horse, all by himself.

The plainsman yielded, though he held on to the rein, and once more they started in flight, for the red-skins were yet grouped upon the prairie.

CHAPTER IV.

A VILLAIN'S PLOT.

"Oh, Papa Bancroft, where's my little brother?"

The question came from a little girl of six, and was addressed to a horseman who had just ridden up to the door of a pleasant home in the far West.

The girl was a strangely-beautiful child, with large, expressive eyes, a wealth of golden curls, and a face full of feeling, and intelligence beyond her years.

She was dressed in homespun, but the surroundings of her home indicated that it was the dwelling place of a well-to-do settler.

The home was a better one than the average homes then in the State of Kansas, and within it was comfortably furnished; and an old negress busy hanging clothes on a line, and a negro coming from the stable to take the horses of the settler, for he rode one and led another, proved that the owner was well enough off to employ help.

"My dear child, I am sorry to say that I have lost dear little Foxwell," said the man.

"Lost him?" cried the girl.

"Yes, he roamed out of camp, where I left him, while I went to catch one of the horses that got loose, and I think he must have been picked up."

The child burst into tears, bemoaning the loss of her little brother, while the negro said:

"Lordy, Massa Bancroft, dot am too bad! Ho! old woman, litty Foxwell done lost on de pararer," and the man called out to the negress, who came at a run to where the others were.

"Lost! you done lost yer boy chile, Massa Bancroft?" cried the good-hearted negress.

"Yes, Becky; it is too true, and it nearly breaks my heart," was the dejected answer.

"Let me go an' sarch fer him, Massa Bancroft?" said the negro.

"No, Dan, I am going myself to-morrow, soon as I have rest for myself and horse, for I have been a day and night on the search, now."

"Won't he die in dat time, sah?"

"He is already dead, unless picked up by some one."

"How you come to lose him, sah?" asked Becky.

"My horse got away, and left camp, and I had a chase of hours after him, and left Fox to await my return."

"When I got back to camp he was gone, and I saw where he had walked out upon the prairie, and there I lost his trail."

"I begged you to let him stay; poor little brother Fox," cried the little girl, and Becky the negress led her away to console her, while the man entered the house.

It was the same man whom the reader will remember as having deserted the brave little boy, leaving him asleep in the prairie camp.

He wore a dejected look, and the next morning he mounted his horse and rode away alone, for he would not allow Dan to accompany him, as he begged to do, though Becky said she could get along all right without him.

The man wended his way in a given direction, as though he had a certain objective point in view.

All day long, with slight rest, he pushed on across the prairie, and toward sunset came in sight of the timber motte ahead.

It was just dark when he reached there, and it was the same camping-place where he had deserted the boy, just three nights before.

He built a fire, and looked through the timber.

It seemed as though no one had been there since he had left it, but still the boy was gone, and with him the two blankets.

"In the morning I will search for his trail," he said, and so sought rest.

With the dawn he was up, and after eating his breakfast, he mounted his horse and set out upon the trail left by the boy, for it was still well defined as the nature of the grass was such as to leave it very distinctly.

What had taken poor little Foeie a day to go over, the horseman made in little over an hour and came to the bank of the stream.

"Ah! the boy has been torn to pieces by wolves," he cried.

"No, I am not much of a frontiersman, but I can follow a trail pretty well, and read signs, and these dead carcasses of wolves about this tree, tell me that these was some one else than the boy here.

"These brutes were shot, and here are hoof-tracks.

"Yes, he was treed by the wolves, and somebody came to his rescue.

"Now to find out who that somebody is!"

Dismounting, he searched long and carefully about the place, and at last followed the horse-tracks toward the clump of timber.

Had he repented of his cruel act, and was he trying to find the deserted boy?

The sequel will show.

Although he had not dwelt very long upon the prairies, he had become a pretty good expert in signs, both in wood and plains-craft, and he saw where the horseman had gone into camp, and more, in the shanty he found the boy's tin cup and belt.

This proved to him that he had camped there with some one.

Also he picked up a torn blanket, which he knew had not belonged to him, or Foeie, and not far away were the tracks of the same horse, about a stake, to which was attached a lariat, which had been cut with a sharp knife.

There were plenty of other hoof-tracks, but they came from over the river-bank, where was a footpath near the water.

Two graves, newly made, and quite clearly concealed under slush and leaves, were also found in the timber, and arrows were sticking in the shanty, and here and there among the trees.

"Whoever found the boy, it looks as though he was attacked by Indians and some one was killed.

"I will see who, for it may be the boy."

He threw off the logs and brush, and then dug into the soft earth until his knife touched a human form.

"An Indian," he said in a tone of disgust.

Then the other grave was opened, and once more he said contemptuously:

"Red-skin."

A moment after, he remarked:

"I'll not trouble myself to throw back the earth.

"Let them be food for the wolves.

"Now, to follow the trail of that horse which was staked yonder.

"I see also, that the unshod horses of the red-skins followed him, so that tells the story of a chase.

"Now to see what I can find out."

So on the trail he went, and after following it a mile, he saw the grass trampled down and blood-stains.

"There's been trouble right here," he muttered as he rode on.

Then he came to just another such place, and here he paused.

Once more he resumed his way, and after awhile he said:

"The red-skins gave it up about here; I guess that fellow, whoever he was, was too many for them.

"But here are the tracks of two horses together, so that means something."

Arriving at the timber, he discovered that a

halt had been made by the two horses, and then the trail went off in a northerly direction.

This he pursued until sunset, when far in the distance he caught sight of a clump of trees, and within them a house was visible.

"The trail leads yonder," he said, as he sat upon his horse upon a rise of the prairie, gazing upon the distant house miles away.

As he looked, a bright light flashed out, and he saw that a lamp had been lighted in the little home.

With this light as a beacon, he rode on once more, and, after awhile came near the prairie domicile, so snugly situated in the timber.

Dismounting at a fence, he hitched his horse and went forward on foot.

All was silent about the place.

He saw a large, whitewashed cabin, with out-buildings beyond, and he knew that it was the abode of some thrifty settler who had risked his life to build up for himself a home in that far-away land, where the red-skins were the foes of the white man.

The light still shone brightly in the window, and securing a good position, the man looked in.

He saw a bright fire, and a woman before it preparing supper.

Near a table sat a man, and upon his lap was a child.

The table was set for supper, and altogether it was a cheerful, pleasant home scene.

"By Heaven! it is the boy!"

"That is the man who saved him, and now I know that he is not dead I will be able to govern my actions accordingly.

"He will be well cared for here, and here let him remain, for the girl will serve my purpose even better than both; for, the boy believed to be dead, she will get all the inheritance.

"I will keep my eye on the boy, and as long as he does not loom up in my way, he can live; but if he does, he must die!"

So saying the villain, or man plotting for riches through two children not his own, retraced his way to his horse, and mounting, rode away in the darkness across the prairie.

CHAPTER V.

THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE.

THE scene on which the man, who had so cruelly deserted the little boy upon the prairie, looked was indeed a home-like and pleasant one.

It was a settler's dwelling-place, and without doubt one who took interest in his home in the Far West.

There was about it a look of thrift and comfort, and within doors all was cheerful and inviting.

Had the man who had so persistently followed the trail of the settler, after his rescue of poor, deserted little Fox, knocked at the cabin-door and asked for shelter, it would have been given him with a cordiality that would have made him feel at once at home.

But that dark-faced dweller upon the prairies had no such desire, for he only wished to know whether the boy was dead or alive, and if the latter, where he was, that, should there be need of finding him, he would know where to place his hands upon him.

He had taught the boy and his sister to call him papa, and young as they were they hardly knew the difference.

He had treated them well, but it was the kindness of the cat when playing with its victim, the mouse.

He had known that they had inherited a vast fortune; he knew that they were twin brother and sister, and that executors had been appointed to care for their wealth until they had reached the age of eighteen.

Should either die, the other got the entire estate.

So he had kidnapped the poor little ones, taken them to his home in the West, and pretended to have found them, deserted by others, and in the end he would have all his own way.

It was a long time to wait; but he could be patient.

But the boy, Fox, seemed to his kidnapper to remember too much; he was not as readily managed as his sister and was far ahead of his years.

So he was dangerous, and must be gotten rid of.

How this deed was accomplished the reader well knows.

But poor little Foxwell was not doomed to die upon the prairie, or to be torn to pieces by wolves, for his pluck saved him, as it carried him to the stream where his kind preserver found him.

Upon reaching the home of the plainsman little Foeie received a welcome such as he might have had from his own mother.

A kind-faced woman, the plainsman's wife, who had buried her own little boy, took him to her heart and he had a home at once.

That night the poor boy went to sleep in the lap of the good woman, lulled by the low voice of the man and his wife, as they talked over the blessing that had fallen to them, and which they feared might be taken from them by his own parents.

Bright and early Foeie was up, and he went with the settler to feed the chickens and hogs, and made friends at once with the hired man.

He missed his sister, and spoke of her often; but he could give no idea of where he lived, for remembering indistinctly his former home in the East, his thoughts went back to it, rather than his latter home upon the prairies.

"I do believe the poor boy has been kidnapped from his home," said the good woman.

"It seems so," answered her husband, and he determined honestly to make inquiries that would lead to the finding of the boy's parents, much as he desired to keep him with them.

But houses were very far apart in that land, travelers were few, and those the settler asked knew nothing of a lost child, and so it came to be believed that the little boy was indeed a waif of the prairie, stolen from his Eastern home, and lost from some emigrant train that had passed near, for he had seen so much, and was so young, he could not tell a correct story to lead to the finding of the man who had deserted him.

In his new home Fox was happy, and when he was not helping his foster-mother, he was trudging along at the heels of the settler, or riding the horses to water at the brook.

Thus weeks and months passed away, and the settler and his wife were happy, for they had come to regard Foxwell as their own child.

A cloud was upon the face of the settler one day, as he came home from the little town thirty miles distant, where he had been to purchase stores for the winter's use.

His wife saw it, and at once suspected that he had found out who were the parents of the little boy, and asked quickly:

"Quick! tell me! has he got to leave us?"

"Oh, no, it is not about little Foeie that I am worried; but the Indians are on the war-path, and they have burned houses and killed settlers not twenty miles from here, and it is feared they will sweep this entire locality, and all settlers are arming to go and fight them."

"And you are going?"

"No, I will not leave my home unprotected; but I will at once stand on guard near by, and be prepared for the worst, while Henry must give up harvesting the crops, and keep near the house."

"And I will get the weapons all together, and have them in good condition," said the brave woman.

So every precaution was made, and the plainsman mounted his horse and set out on a scouting-trip to see if there were any signs of red-skins near his home.

At nightfall he returned with word that not a sign had been seen of them, and the few scouts he had met said the raiding band had not crossed the river, but had gone to the northward.

With a feeling of perfect security the settler and his family retired to rest; but at midnight they were awakened by the loud barking of the house-dogs, then yelps of pain and silence, and next a glare of flames shot up around the house.

The settler, his man and his wife were already up, and they saw that the house was surrounded by yelling red-skins, and that it had been set on fire.

Poor little Foeie was also awake, and had hastily dressed himself, anxious to lend whatever aid he could.

A glance from the garret windows showed that the out-houses were already in possession of the Indians and that the horses had been led out, while they were preparing to set them on fire.

The crack of the rifles rung out, for the man-servant and the settler's wife also fired and the Indians fell back, for two of their number fell.

But only for a moment, as they crowded forward, half a hundred together, and, though the defenders fought with desperation, and several red-skins fell, the door was broken open and then came the last scene and it was quickly ended.

How it was that in that mad scene of death, when the settler, his wife and Henry were slain, little Foeie escaped death, it is impossible to tell; but he was not hurt, and seizing him

in his arms a chief took him out of the burning cabin.

Soon the place was sacked, the buildings were all in flames, and with their plunder from the cabin, the horses and stock, the red raiders set off on their retreat.

Other bands, also loaded down with booty joined them, and having struck a terrible blow upon the settlers, the Indians retreated in force, slowly and defiantly, their young men fighting as they went, and beating back the pale-faces who pursued them, until they reached their own hunting-grounds in safety, and there no one dared follow them.

CHAPTER VI. THE BOY CAPTIVE.

THE remembrance of that midnight massacre seemed to be ever before the eyes of poor little Fox, and his eyes were red with weeping all along the northward march of the red-skins.

He had seen them kill his foster-father and mother, had seen them strike poor Henry down, and then tear the scalps from their heads, after which they had robbed the cabin, set all on fire and departed.

Naturally he stood in awe of them, and watched them with looks of horror.

As they went along he saw that it was a continual battle with the whites.

He would see dead and wounded Indians brought forward and strapped to horses, and thus carried on the march.

He saw white men in the distance fall dead as the Indians fired upon them, and heard the fearful war-cries of the cruel savages.

It was a bitter, fearful experience for any one, and certainly for a mere child.

But at last the Indians reached their mountain fastness, and the whites dared not follow them.

Soon after they arrived at their village, and the squaws, old men and children came forth to meet them.

There were wails for the dead, mingling with shouts of defiance of their foes, and yells of delight at their victory.

The village was gone mad it seemed, and poor little Fox and one other captive, were the center of all eyes.

The little children crowded around Fox, gazing curiously at him, and the squaws would have been cruel had they dared to be; but the chief, who had claimed the boy as his own, was all-powerful, and he said no harm should befall the little captive.

There was one other captive, an old scout, who had been wounded and taken prisoner.

He had seen little Fox and felt deep sympathy for him.

"Who is yer, leetle one?" he asked.

"I'm Fox," was the reply.

"Did they kill your people?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"The red varmints!"

"They burned our house, too."

"Oh, yes, they don't do no devilry by halves; but the chief, Wolf Eye, has took a shine to you, and I guess he'll not let you suffer, fer I seen him lift that Injun boy four feet high with his foot fer teasin' yer, and knocked ther snags down ther old squaw's throat when she struck yer."

"They'll let up on you, I guess, and kill me."

"Oh, no, they wouldn't kill you, sir, would they?"

"Will a duck swim, and a wolf eat b'ar-meat?"

"Now I guess so, and I'm as good as dead, boy; but don't distarb yerself on my account, fer I has lived fifty years and kept my scalp, and I guess I has seen all thar is ter see on 'arth, so need not complain, though I does wish I c'd git three more Injun scalps ter make my string hev a clean two dozen, fer I has pulled loose red-skin ha'r twenty-one times."

"Cut, leetle one?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yer say yer name are Fox?"

"Yes, sir."

"Waal, you jist keep yer eyes open, and maybe suthin' may tarn up fer us ter git out o' this, for I hain't one ter preach my funeral sarmon ontill ther body are ready fer burial, and I intends ter keep awake and watch sarcumstances."

Then in a whisper the old scout continued:

"If we kin git away, leetle Fox, I'll arrange it, so jist keep yer eye on old Dead Shot Dave and he may surprise yer."

"Yes, sir," said Fox, taking in the idea fully that old Dead Shot Dave meant to escape and take him with him.

What with war-dances, scalp-dances, and general rejoicing, and bewailing the dead combined, the Indian village was a scene of terrible excitement for days.

Dead Shot Dave had been wounded in the leg, and he was lame, so the Indians only wished to keep him until he got able to run, and then they meant to have some fun with him in their own barbarous way.

As the days passed on it seemed that little Fox had completely won the heart of Wolf Eye, for, stern to others, he was yet even kind to the captive boy.

The old scout, whom Fox visited when he could, for he was not kept in bonds, as the man was, told him that he had heard the Indians say how once a settler's daughter had saved Wolf Eye's life, when he was captured by the whites, and aided him to escape, and the chief had said that the boy looked like the young girl who had befriended him, and hence his goodness to little Fox.

The boy occupied the chief's tent with him, for Wolf Eye was unmarried, and this was one thing in the favor of the little captive, for had the chief had a wife, she would have made it a very wretched existence for Fox.

As it was it was bad enough; but then there was no danger to his life, and boy-like, with the chief as his backer, Fox began to hold his own with the little Indian boys about his age.

Soon he became a tyrant and bossed the young Indians until he became their leading spirit.

He soon became the best shot with bow and arrow, could throw a lasso with great skill, won all the foot-races, swam like a fish, and for strength and endurance was ahead of all.

He was taught how to trap birds, rabbits and squirrels, and set to work also in everything he could lay his hand to.

At last the scout, Dead Shot Dave, was able to walk well upon his wounded leg; but the winter was now upon the village, and it was determined to put off the gantlet-running for life until the spring.

But the scout was made to do heavy drudgery, and, always under guard he was kept constantly busy.

But he kept well, did his work uncomplainingly, and submitted to the insults cast upon him daily without a murmur.

He had always had a word of kindness, and a smile for Fox, when he saw him, and often said:

"They thinks they is makin' a Injun out of you, Fox, but they hain't, for though you kin out-Injun 'em at their own tricks, you is still a pale-face, and they'll find it out yit."

"Jest wait un'til the springtime comes, and we'll show 'em suthin', leetle boy, for I doesn't keep my eyes open for nuthin'."

And at last the springtime did come, and the impatient red-skins prepared to torture the scout to death.

They had decided to have him run several gantlets, and all arrangements had been made accordingly.

When the snow was gone they guarded the scout more closely than ever, but still made him work from morning until night, chopping wood, hauling water for the squaws to cook with, and attending to all the drudgery they could heap upon him.

One night it was decided that the next afternoon should witness the gantlet-running, and so the news flew around camp, and Fox, with tears in his eyes, begged to go and say good-by to the scout, and Wolf Eye gave him permission.

When Fox left the unfortunate man he did not look as sad as might be expected, for Dead Shot Dave had told him something to think over carefully, and it seemed to please him.

CHAPTER VII. THE DEATH GANTLET.

THE Indian chief, Wolf Eye, was an excellent judge of horse-flesh, and he had the best animals in the tribe.

He had seen the plainsman's favorite horse, and the superb white animal which Fox had named Snowball, and he had selected them both for his property.

Fox appeared to be a natural rider, and although the chief had a hundred horses, he had ridden them all, though often he had been thrown.

His greatest delight was to go each morning to the valley, a plain, where the horses were feeding, and bring two animals to the village, where they were staked out near the chief's tepee for his use during the day, did he desire to ride through the hills or go upon a hunt.

One horse was also kept at night near the tepee, in case there was need for him.

As all the Indian boys did the same work for their fathers or big brothers, as the case might

be, it resulted in a cavalcade of several hundred ponies being raced to the grazing grounds each morning and back in the evening.

Young as he was, Fox had made the discovery that the two fastest horses in the tribe were those stolen from the murdered plainsman, while Snowball had a speed that was wonderful.

In carrying the two horses to the grazing lands late in the afternoon, Fox would ride back on the animal that was to be on duty at night, as the other boys were wont to do.

Now Fox was as cunning as the animal whose name he bore, and his good-by talk with Dead Shot Dave had put an idea into his young head that he was anxious to carry out.

He knew that the horses would be started for the grazing land an hour before sunset, and about that time the Indians would begin their fun with the prisoner.

Now there was one thing the Indian boys gloated on, and that was in witnessing the sufferings of a pale-face prisoner; but there was another charm for them in practicing with fire-arms.

Few good rifles belonged to the tribe, and the best weapon was the Winchester repeating rifle which Wolf Eye had taken from the plainsman, along with a quantity of ammunition.

The chief did not understand its working exactly, but Fox had instructed him in the way to load and fire it, and Wolf Eye regarded it with a degree of affection superior to anything else on earth.

He had several times fired it rapidly, from the first to the last shot, to the admiration of the whole village, and he was envied the possession of the priceless weapon by all of the warriors of the tribe.

The Indian boys had often asked White Fox, as they called the little captive, to get the weapon—that is, steal it out, and take it to the grazing ground.

They wished to see him fire it for their amusement, and also hoped that he would be found out and punished, for they did not like the little white tyrant.

So Fox concluded to oblige them, and he selected the day appointed for Dead Shot Dave to run the death gantlet.

To each one of the boys who were to carry horses to the grazing-ground that afternoon, Fox went secretly and told them it was the very chance for them to shoot Wolf Eye's rifle, for all the people of the village would be at the torture of the white man, and that they must start for the grazing-ground early, and he would get the rifle and follow them, when the chief left his teepee for the scene of death.

The boys were delighted at the prospect, though they hated to miss the other affair; but Fox told them they would have a chance to see other prisoners tortured, and he promised to let each one of them shoot the rifle.

That settled it, and the boys started early for the grazing-grounds.

They were called to by their parents and others, and told to wait for the white man's death run, but many said they would be back in time, and others made excuses of various kinds.

In the mean time, Dead Shot Dave had been brought out of the guard wigwam, and placed in position, in the open space at one end of the village.

It had been decided that the warriors should stand at one end, giving him a start of ten bow-lengths, and he should run straight across the open space, which was about six hundred feet wide.

The warriors were to give chase in a body, armed with their knives only, and if they could catch him they were to prick him with them, but not to seriously hurt him so as to check the sport through his injuries.

If he crossed the line ahead of all of them, he was to be started back again, over the same course, with all the young braves in pursuit, who were to also prick him with their knives.

If he escaped the second time without a scratch he was to be allowed to marry a squaw and become one of the tribe; but if he was even touched by the blade of a knife, he was to then be turned over to the squaws to torture to death.

Such was the arrangement, and one can well understand the feelings of the prisoner as he was led out to face the deadly ordeal.

But the brave scout was calm, cast his eyes over the cruel faces of his foes, and then glanced in the direction of Chief Wolf Eye's tent.

The village was built in the shape of a crescent with the chief's tepee, the guard wigwam and Medicine Lodge in the open space on a hill.

From point to point of the crescent the race

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was to be run, and hither the chasers were to stand, while the old men, women and children were to form lines on either side the full distance.

Dead Shot Dave was led to his position by two warriors, his arms were then untied, and he stood awaiting the signal to start, and which Wolf Eye was to give.

The scout stood leaning forward, his face pale, but full of courage and his attitude that of a man who knew that a few feet gained at the start might save him.

The racers, some three hundred in number were stripped to their waists for the run, and each armed only with his knife, held in the right hand.

They stood in a semicircle, so arranged that no one of them would be any nearer to the fugitive than another.

At last all was in readiness, and amid breathless silence Wolf Eye gave the order to start, and, amid wild war-cries from the warriors, and shrieks from the women and children, the race was begun.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT.

DEAD SHOT DAVE, was a man of remarkable physical prowess, and his endurance had scores of times saved his life.

From boyhood he had been noted as a fleet runner, and he had never found a man who could keep near him in a long or short race.

The wound in his leg had wholly healed, and he had been keeping up a daily exercise that greatly helped him for the task he had to undergo.

With his belt drawn tight, and every energy collected for the struggle he bounded into the air at the word, as though fired from a cannon, and his feet had touched the ground in his first jump, and gained three bow-lengths before the nimblest of the warriors had started.

From the moment they did, a howl went up to see that he was gaining, and rapidly too.

For a hundred feet he ran straight as an arrow flies, and with almost as great speed it seemed, for he surely would have distanced his pursuers, had he held on to the goal; but instead he suddenly swerved to the right, and jerking from his leggings leg a long knife, he charged directly upon the crippled, aged, and women and children who were now in front of him.

With yells of terror they fled from before him, awed by his wild cries, and passing through the line he sped on up the slope, while groans, shrieks, war-whoops and veritable howls followed him, and the whole village was now in chase.

And no wonder the Indians were wild with rage, for from behind the large tepee of Wolf Eye, rode the boy captive, White Fox, and he was mounted upon a large dark bay horse, while he led a snow-white animal.

Both horses were saddled and bridled, and the bay carried a large bundle strapped behind the boy's saddle, while little Fox held in his hands the Winchester rifle, which had sent so many of the Indian boys to the grazing-ground expecting to have a chance to fire it.

At a gallop Fox rode to meet the scout, and without stopping the horses, the brave man ran alongside of Snowball and leaped upon his back.

Then the horses bounded forward into a run, and none too soon, for the nearest Indians were but sixty feet away, and though the warriors were unarmed, excepting their knives, there were others not in the race who carried their bows and arrows, and the latter were sent flying after the fugitives.

It was a boldly-conceived plot of the daring scout, and he had made all clear to little Fox just what he was to do, and, without a mistake the shrewd and brave boy carried out the plan.

No better plot could have been arranged, for the boys had carried the warriors' horses to the grazing-grounds a mile away in the valley and there were hardly any animals in the village.

But unhurt the two fugitives went over the hilltop, and almost crazed with fury the Indians rushed hither and thither.

But Wolf Eye started his fleetest warriors off after their arms and horses, and sent half a dozen in chase, upon the animals picked up in camp.

But, by the time the Indians started, the two fugitives were a quarter of a mile away and riding down the valley at an easy gallop.

"Boy pard, you is blessed with a head chock-full o' brains, and yer pluck w'd fill a big man's heart."

"Yer has saved my life, and I clings ter yer

ontel death gits his grip on me, and don't you forgit it, do you mind," and Death Shot Dave put out his hand and grasped that of the boy, who was very proud of his success, and his eyes sparkled with delight.

"They can't catch us now, sir," he said, eagerly.

"I guess not, for you got the two best horses in the camp; but it's a mighty long ride afore us, and we needs all the start we has got; but yonder comes half a dozen warriors and they is drivin' the'r horses hard, you bet."

There were now in sight seven Indians, mounted upon the horses they had picked up in the village.

The animals were bareback, had only their lariats to serve as bridles, and were by no means the best horses belonging to the tribe.

Their riders were pushing them hard in chase; but Dead Shot Dave very quietly held on at the same slow canter, while he turned in his saddle, and leveled the Winchester, which Fox had handed to him when he sprung upon the back of Snowball.

As the Indians came within a hundred yards Dead Shot fired, and a horse went down.

Again he fired and the second pony fell, while the Indians drew rein quickly and opened fire with what weapons they had.

"Ah! they've got one good rifle thar, so we'll hev ter git out o' range a leetle more, boy pard," said the scout, as one bullet sped by them, the others and the arrows falling short.

"Ride on, sonny, while I drop another poor horse," said the scout, and at his third shot a pony fell.

Then the two rode on, and the lesson taught the Indians prevented their crowding too close upon the fugitives.

"Got plenty o' ammunition, Fox?"

"Yes, sir, I brought all Wolf Eye had left."

"Good! and anything to eat?"

"Yes, sir, I stole all that I could find; it is in the bundle."

"What else you got in that bundle, Fox?"

"Three blankets, sir, and two water-gourds, and what we have to eat, and I stole the revolver of old Wolf Eye, too, and it is there."

"Fox, you would make a good ordnance officer, commissary and quartermaster for the army, for you takes 'em all in; but in half an hour it's goin' ter be dark, and ef possible we must throw them varmints off our trail then; but how is you on the sleep?"

"Oh, I can keep awake, sir."

"Well, we may have to ride all night; but ef we can dodge them red-skins in the darkness, we will reach the pararer in about four hours, and then we kin halt for rest, for yer'll need it, le tle boy, though I kin stand it well for days."

The few red-skins in sight still came on, and yet kept out of range.

It was evident to the scout that they were simply waiting for the large force, who had gone after their horses to overtake them, and then they would press hotly upon the fugitives.

"Come, Fox, we'll ride on fast, so as to tire their ponies to catch up, and then, with night, we can do as we please."

So saying, the two rode on at a rapid pace; but the four Indians pushed as rapidly after them, for the fugitives were not forcing their horses, though the red-skins were.

At last night fell, and drawing rein, the scout listened attentively for a moment.

Then he dismounted and placed his ear to the ground.

"We have got to push, boy pard, for I guesses thar is a full hundred of 'em a-comin' from the clatter they makes."

"Well, them as is coming has pushed their ponies from the grazin'-ground, a mile t'other side o' ther village, and thet makes 'em travel two mile more than we has."

"Then ag'in, they has shoved hard to overtake us, while we has been ridin' slow, yer may say, and we has fresh horses, while they hasn't as fresh ones as they'd like."

So saying, the scout rode on in advance, taking the lariat of the bay horse, so that he could not get away from him in the darkness by any possible chance.

As best he could the scout picked his way, continually talking to his boy comrade, to encourage him; but the way they followed was through the hills, and there was no way of turning off for miles, and the pursuers knew this, and so came swiftly on.

"When we gits out o' this pass atween the hills, pard, we'll be all right, for we kin tarn to ther right or left, and they can't trail us in this darkness; but they knows the road here, and means to push us hard, while we has to let our horses feel the way."

"Keep well in the saddle, leetle one, for if yer horse should stumble you might git a fall."

"I'm holding on, sir," replied Fox from the rear, and the scout now urged the horses more rapidly forward, as the clatter of many hoofs showed him that their pursuers were but a couple of hundred yards behind them.

"I'll send 'em word we is here," said the scout, and he halted, threw the Winchester to his shoulder, and pumped out eight or ten shots in rapid succession.

"Now come, boy pard, for I has woke up a hornets' nest back yonder, and them red-skins is mad as maniacs," and as if to prove the truth of Dead Shot Dave's assertion, a perfect chorus of yells and war-cries came down the valley, and the clatter of hoofs ceased, a sure indication that the shots of the scout had done deadly work.

CHAPTER IX.

A CLOSE CALL.

WHEN he had sent the bullets flying back among the crowd of Indians in the canyon, firing wholly at random as he did—for he could only guess at their position—the scout again pushed on, and as soon as he came to a place where he could turn out of the beaten trail, he did so.

He heard the clatter of many hoofs, pressing on in chase, and knew they would come to where he turned off not more than two minutes behind them, and so he rode alongside of Fox and took hold of his bridle-rein.

Soon after the sound ceased, and instantly the scout drew rein.

He knew Indian cunning thoroughly, and understood that they knew where he could turn off, to the right or left, before they came to it, and that word had been passed back to halt as one man when a signal would be given.

"They stopped short, Fox, knowin' the trails were rocky, and hopin' to hear the clatter of our hoofs; but I'm onto ther cunnin' rascals, and stopped as they did, so they is most darned-ly fooled."

A moment after the noise of hoofs was heard again, and once more the scout and Fox moved on their way.

Again there was a sudden halt among the Indians, and as quickly Dead Shot Dave drew rein on his and the boy's horse.

With the next sound of hoofs moving, the scout pushed on once more, and then kept on at a gallop for quite a long distance.

At length they came to a slope that led them down toward the prairie, and in half an hour more they were going at a rapid canter over the level plain.

This was kept up until a mile or more had been gone over, and then the scout drew rein, while he said:

"Now, my boy pard, we kin hev a rest for ourselves and the ponies."

With this the scout halted, and unfastening the bundle from the horse Fox rode, threw it upon the ground.

He also unsaddled the two animals and staked them out.

Then the two sat down on the prairie and began to eat their supper, for the boy had brought provisions, such as they were, as Dead Shot Dave had told him to do.

Spreading a blanket, the two then laid down and in a moment Fox was fast asleep, for he was utterly tired out, for the strain of the past two days upon him had been very great.

This the good-hearted scout knew, and so had halted, where otherwise he would have kept on, for he was able to stand any fatigue, and he saw that the horses were not in the slightest degree distressed by their twenty-mile jaunt.

As soon as Fox was asleep, the scout slipped softly away from his side, and then walking a short distance away, stood peering out over the prairie.

He well understood that the red-skins might ride upon them at any moment; but he could see them at least a couple of hundred yards away, and hear them still further off, so he could have a chance to make a run of it.

For two hours he stood there, upright, silent, watchful, and then he decided to saddle the horses.

This he did, and then staked them by short ropes, with their bridles on also.

Having done this, he stood on guard once more, determined not to awaken the sleeping boy until compelled to do so.

"It's not far ter dawn, so I guesses I hed better be on ther safe side and wake him up, fer them varmints may be too near us now fer comfort."

"Ther boy hes hed four hours' sleep, and thet will help him amazin'."

So saying, he bent over Fox and called him in a low tone.

Instantly the boy was awake, for his life in an Indian camp had been a good training to him.

"Time to go, sir?" he asked, springing up.

"Yes, leetle pard, we better be a-movin', fer them varmints may be near us."

"Yes, sir, I'm ready; but did you have a nice sleep?"

"I got along putty fair, and hope you did."

"Yes, indeed, sir and I had so many pretty dreams."

The blankets were now rolled up, and strapped upon the bay, and placing Fox in the saddle, the scout mounted and they were just about to move on when the boy said in a low tone:

"There's somebody coming, sir."

"Injuns, as I live! You has a keen eye, boy; but they don't see us, and no more did I see them."

"Come, give me hold of your stake-line, and we'll git."

Taking the end of the line, so that the white horse could not get away from him, the scout started forward at a gallop.

Instantly they were seen, and loud yells broke from the lips of the red-skins as they started in chase.

And here, there, everywhere, it seemed, there came answering yells, and the scout knew that the Indians had suspected he would have to stop to let the boy rest, and had therefore broken their band into twenty different parties, and spread them all along the prairie, a mile or more from the foot-hills.

Dawn was now breaking, and dark objects could be seen moving in one direction, while the red-skins kept up their wild yells to let their comrades know just where they were.

"We hain't no friends runnin' round loose over ther pararer, boy pard, and I guesses we kin tarn a leetle lead astray s'archin' fer Injuns," said the scout.

As he spoke he halted, and bringing up his rifle fired twice at the nearest party, then he gave another squad a couple of shots, then a third, then a fourth, and last a fifth little band received his leaden compliments.

That some horse, and rider went down was certain, as was it that there were warriors who heard the singing of bullets coming unpleasantly near; but, without waiting to discover the effect of his shots, the scout again rode on, riding by the side of the boy, and both horses running at a rapid pace.

"We has a gate to pass through, my sonny; but I'm thinking we'll not suffer," said the scout, as he saw that two of the Indian bands were further out upon the prairie, and were riding at full speed to head them off.

There were half a dozen warriors in each one of these parties, and they had to ride a quarter of a mile toward a common center, while the fugitives had nearly as much ground to cover to pass between them.

This, too, was their only chance, as now it could be plainly seen that they were hemmed in.

"Now we must let 'em out for all they is worth, boy pard, and I'll take some shots on ther wing at 'em as we skims along."

"Hold on hard now, and don't yer fall off, for ef yer does, yer'll be roasted sart'in."

Fox seemed to appreciate fully his danger, and held on hard, as he was told, while the two horses sprung to their work, as though they too understood what was expected of them.

"By ther Rockies! but these horses hes wings," cried Dead Shot Dave, as he noted the great speed at which the horses were going.

The Indians saw it, too, and they urged their ponies on with cruel blows.

For a moment it seemed as though the two Indian bands would close in on the fugitives; but only for a moment, and then all saw that the speed of the two horses would carry them through the line some distance ahead, unless some accident happened.

As he saw that the red-skins were getting their bows and arrows ready to fire, the scout, who had now filled the magazine of the matchless rifle he carried, determined to forestall them.

Thus, as they dashed along he began to pump out the leaden bullets into the band on the right, not stopping until the rifle had cracked ten times.

Without looking at what damage he had done, the scout fired upon the other party as many shots more, and a yell escaped his lips, as he saw that he had made one party check up,

for an Indian and a couple of ponies had gone down.

Another pony in the other party was dropping back, with a broken leg, and his rider had sprung to the ground, while a second red-skin had received a wound that knocked him out of his saddle.

The others fired a shower of arrows, but one only clipped the bay horse slightly on the neck, and the others missed.

Going like the wind the two horses, in another moment carried their riders beyond range, and it at once became a chase, with odds in favor of the fugitives, as the Indians were spread out a mile in their rear.

"We are safe, boy pard, ef our horses holds out, and I think they has ther grit in 'em ter leave yonder ponies out o' sight in a couple o' hours," was the scout's quiet remark, as he sped along with the daring boy by his side, and showing not an atom of fear upon his bright, handsome face.

"Yes, sir, we're all right now," was the plucky rejoinder, and Fox looked over his shoulder with boyish glee at the thrilling race for life in which he was a participant.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOY SCOUT.

WHEN it came to a steady run over the prairie, the scout at once realized that he and Fox had every advantage, for their horses were not distressing themselves and yet gained steadily upon the red-skins.

In a line two miles long, the Indians were stretched out over the prairie, a hundred in number, while afar back a small party grouped together told the story of the scout's deadly aim, which had placed several ponies and men out of the race.

The red-skins fully realized that they were being beaten; but they held on with desperate tenacity, hoping for a fall of one of the horses, or some accident that might yet give them their game.

After a two hours' rapid gallop the two fugitives reached the banks of a stream.

The scout gave the horses a swallow of water, and then rode down the bank, to keep near where water could be had when the animals were cooled off.

They were now three miles ahead of the red-skins, so walked their horses leisurely along.

The animals recuperated rapidly, seemed to become wholly rested in half an hour, and then, with a refreshing drink of water, they crossed the stream.

The scout and the boy partook of their breakfast, and when they mounted Fox was put upon Snowball that his light weight might rest that animal.

The Indians were now but a couple of hundred yards away, and coming rapidly on, for they seemed to feel that something had gone wrong with the fugitives.

To check their glee, as they came on with wild, exultant yells, Dead Shot Dave rattled off half a dozen shots, and then the two set off in a sweeping gallop once more.

Realizing, upon reaching the stream, that the two had simply been resting, and with the horses of the fugitives running free, as they were, and their own ponies panting and weary, the red-skins gave up the chase.

They did not care to push on further into the vicinity of the settlements, with their horses tired, little ammunition and no provisions, especially when they saw no prospect of capturing the fugitives.

So they called a halt and a rest, and seeing it, the scout said:

"We'll go slow now, boy pard, for our horses has a long trail afore 'em."

After they had gone miles, the scout looked back, as did the boy, and the latter said:

"They are going back, sir."

"Foxie, my boy, that is an Indian trick."

"A trick?"

"Yes, sonny, and as you is going to turn scout, and be my boy, ef your folks has been massacred, as yer told me they was, I'll tell yer a secret."

"Now, I counted them Injuns, soon as all of 'em was stretched out o' ther pararer."

"Now thar were jist ninety-seven of 'em, counting ther seven thet stayed behind, fer I either kilt or wounded two, and t'other five were with 'em."

"Ther ponies counted up likewise ther same, and so I now sees thet they has tarned back."

"But I counts yonder jist seventy of 'em."

"Now whar is ther other twenty?"

"I don't know, sir."

"I does."

"Where are they, Mister Dead Shot?"

"They is hidin' yonder in ther fringe o' timber on ther river."

"Hiding?"

"Yes, they thinks I is a durned fool, and thet I will think they hes all gone back, and so go on slow ter camp, and not expect 'em along."

"They knows this country, and about understands jist whar I'll camp ter-night, and so arter we gits out o' sight, they'll come swoopin' along, and when it gits dark, up they'll come and pounce down upon us."

"Now thet are tha'r leetle game; but I'll jist show 'em a game thet a pale-face kin hold trump keerds in."

Whether Fox understood all that Dave said, I do not know, but he got a good idea of just what the red-skins intended doing, and he gazed with admiration upon his friend who knew so well how to read Indian human nature.

At a slow pace they kept on, halting for an hour at noon, and giving a good rest to both the horses and themselves, for Fox, at the scout's suggestion, after eating his frugal dinner, went to sleep, and he did so with a suddenness that was astonishing.

Again pressing on, as the sun drew near the western horizon, the scout said:

"I told you so."

As he spoke he pointed to a clump of timber in the distance.

"There is a good campin'-place, with water in plenty and timber shelter."

"It is jist about where the reds expected me ter camp, if they didn't drive me, and they'll look for us thar."

Just as the sun touched the horizon they reached the water.

It was an excellent camping-place, for there was water and wood and good grazing for their horses.

The animals seemed surprised when they were not at once staked out; but the scout quickly collected some wood and piled it up for a fire.

Then he got two logs, one smaller than the other, and placed them near it, and, with one of the old blankets, covered them over, putting brush at the supposed head and on one side to keep off the wind.

Having completed his arrangements to his satisfaction he started the fire, and after watering the horses, mounted and rode away.

As he rode away he laughed heartily, while he said:

"Fox, my pard, them Injuns will be as mad as maniacs when they runs in to capter us and finds them two logs."

"They'll see the fire when they comes over the prairie rise, and they'll think we is on suspectin' 'em, and so they'll sneak nearer and nearer."

"They stake out their ponies and go on foot, and they'll jist wait until it gits arter midnight, when the attack will be made."

"The logs will be found and we and the horses won't be thar, and you bet they'll give up the game and have to go back dead beat."

"Will you camp to-night?" asked Fox, who was very tired.

"Yes, lad, and within an hour; and we'll have a good long sleep and rest."

"Come this way now," and the scout turned off to the right at a sharp angle.

He knew about where he could strike the winding stream which they had crossed at noon.

Had he known the locality perfectly he could not have hit it better, for, within an hour, they reached the stream just at a level, and no better camping-place could be found.

A fire was built in a hollow, the horses were watered and staked out on a plot of rich grass, and the man and boy sat down and toasted dried buffalo-meat upon sticks and ate it with a relish.

Then Dave found the very place for a bed, and spread his blankets, and took their saddles for pillows.

"Now, sonny, you chip in on a leetle sleep, while I takes a run around the camp to see all is well."

"But you'll go to bed too, sir, for you must be very tired?"

"Yas, I'm tired, and my eyes is heavy; but I'd a leetle rather be very tired than very dead, so I'll hev a look at our surroundin's first, arter which I'll put in some big licks at sleepin'."

So saying, he covered the boy up, and Fox was asleep by the time his head touched the pillow.

Making a complete scout of the camp, Dave found nothing of a suspicious nature to alarm him, so he returned, looked after the horses, put out the fire and then laid down to get the rest he greatly needed.

The sun shone in his face before he woke up, and he and Fox sprung up together.

"Now, sonny, we can stand it, I guess, for a couple of days more if we had to, and the horses looks as fresh as parader flowers.

"Ef yer'll toast some o' that buffalo-meat, I'll git things tergether, as soon as we hev washed ther cobwebs out o' our eyes with a leetle o' thet clear water, fer I does like water and no mistake."

The pure water of the stream refreshed them greatly, and the horses were led into it and seemed to enjoy the treat.

After eating their buffalo-meat, all they had, they mounted and rode on their way, wholly free from any fear of red-skins.

They made a long day of it, going at a quiet pace, and that night found a pleasant camping-place, while they enjoyed more game for supper, which Dave had shot during the day.

The next night they slept in the home of a settler, and early the following morning reached the cabin abode of Dead Shot Dave.

All was just as he had left it, for few indeed knew where he dwelt, as he lived away off to himself in the hills, where there was good trapping and hunting in season, and the rest of the time he was scouting for the army posts.

"Here's our home, sonny, and you is as welcome as though you was my own boy, which I hopes you to be now."

"We'll take a run down to see ef we kin find out anything about yer folks, but if we can't, you come back and live here with me, and I'll make a boy scout o' yer."

Such was the poor waif's entrance upon a young scout's life, and he seemed to be contented with his own lot, while he daily became more proficient in prairie and woodcraft, and handled a rifle and revolver with remarkable skill, and promised to be, as the scout said:

"Ther boss o' 'em all as a boy scout."

CHAPTER XI.

A BOY'S PLUCKY RIDE.

THE summer days passed away and winter came, and yet little Fox dwelt in the home of the scout.

He had learned to trap fish, to insnare small game, and was a good hunter after larger animals and wild beasts.

He had gone with the scout over all the country, for a couple of hundred miles around; had learned to trail Indians, was a crack shot, a superb rider, and was the soldiers pet at the forts he visited.

The winter set in cold, and with quantities of snow, so the scout and his boy pard had the prospect of keeping pretty close to their cabin home until spring.

But they had laid in a quantity of stores, such as flour, coffee, sugar, salt and bacon, and put up a large amount of dried buffalo and deer meats, so they would not suffer, while the horses were well cared for in the hay that had been stacked for them.

Dave had come to love the boy as his own flesh and blood, and, though seemingly an uncouth borderman, he had received a fair education in early life, and so taught him all he could, and had laid in a good supply of books and writing materials for the use of Fox during the long winter days and evenings.

But somehow Dave's iron constitution seemed to be failing, and he complained of pains in the side that were very severe.

He lost his appetite, and, as he said to Fox one day, seemed to be "Letting go ther grip on life."

After the new year set in he began to get worse and Fox heard him say one day:

"Ef it don't let up soon, so as I kin git to a doctor, I'll go under, I guess."

This was enough for Fox, and he begged to let him go to the nearest settlement for a doctor.

But Dave said no, as he feared the boy could never make the long ride of sixty miles through the unbroken snow and in such cold weather.

But Fox had an idea that a doctor would make Dave well at once, and so he urged him to let him go.

"No, Foxie, you cannot go, though I does feel thet a doctor would help me, and thar is a army surgeon, thet was, now practizin' in ther settlement, and he'd come, fer I saved his life once."

"But we'll wait a few weeks longer until ther snow gits off a little more."

That night Dave suffered greatly, and toward morning sunk into a deep sleep.

When he awoke he found a note on the table near him, and it read:

"DEAR PAPA DAVE:—

"I cannot see you sick and not do something to help you."

"I start for the settlement this morning."

"I take plenty of blankets and wraps, my india-rubber blanket, matches, a bunch of pine knots to build a fire, and enough to eat to last a week, so I'm all right, and you must not worry."

"I'll find the way if the snow is on the ground and will bring the doctor."

"I filled the trough with water, for I ride the bay horse and take the mule as a pack-animal, and turned Snowball loose in the stable so he can get plenty of hay while I am gone, and you'll not have to go out to feed him."

"I put the things where you can get at them easy, and you will not have to stir about much."

"Good-by, and I'll fetch the doctor."

"YOUR FOXEY."

"That blessed boy has gone, and he'll make it, if it can be did."

"I would call him back if I could, but he's been gone fer a couple o' hours, as ther fire is burnin' low."

"Why, he hev cooked pervisions 'nough to last me a week, and put a bucket o' water thar on ther table, while he hev piled up wood in plenty, and picked out small sticks so as I won't hev ter lift big ones, and bring on another hemorrhage."

"Waal, ther Lord will take keer o' him, whatever comes o' me."

In the mean time, Fox was riding along over the snow-clad country.

He had wisely taken the large horse, knowing he could make better headway among the drifts, while the large pack-mule he led.

On the latter was a large roll of blankets, some bunches of pine knots, provisions, a hatchet, a shovel and a bag of grass for the animals, for the boy had gone prepared to camp if necessary, and neither starve or freeze.

He knew the direction of the settlement, but the idea of finding a trail in that white mass of snow lying before him was preposterous.

He did not urge his horse, but let him take his own pace, and slowly force his way, stopping often for rest.

As night approached Fox looked about for a place to camp, and found a thick clump of timber upon the side of a hill, at the base of which was a frozen stream.

Then the shovel came into use, and a place was cleared for the horse and the mule under the lee of a rock and amid sheltering trees.

With the hatchet he cut a hole in the ice and watered the animals, after which they were warmly blanketed and given a feed of grain.

Then Fox looked after himself, cut some wood, pulled logs out from under the snow, and soon had a roaring fire that would last for days.

To spread his india-rubber blankets and make a shelter for himself, and then arrange his snug bed within, was but little work, and the flames of the fire sent warmth not only to him but to the horses, who seemed to enjoy the heat.

Soon he had a cup of hot coffee, some toasted bread and broiled meat, and enjoyed his supper immensely.

Adding more fuel to the fire, he then turned in for the night and was soon fast asleep, the horse and mule quickly following his example.

He awoke with the rising sun, and, after feeding and watering the animals, he got his own breakfast.

Then he prepared for the struggle once more, and was soon working his way over the snow-clad country.

From certain surroundings which he recognized, he knew that he had made but half the distance, when night again was coming on, and the indications were that a snowstorm was threatening to fall by dark.

So he hunted up another camping-place, and reached an old deserted cabin, which he remembered stood in some timberland near.

He found it a snug retreat, dilapidated though it was, and it was not long before he had a blazing fire upon the hearth.

The horse and mule were not left out in the cold, but led in to get the benefit of shelter, and they seemed to enjoy the change.

With sunset the snowstorm broke, and when the morning came the storm was still raging; but it looked like clearing up, and the brave boy would not tarry, so pushed on his way once more.

At noon he came to a trail, which he knew led from one settlement to another.

Sleds had lately passed along over the trail, and it was comparatively well broken; so, after a short rest, and a meal for himself and the animals, he pushed as rapidly on as he could.

Darkness overtook him ere he reached the first settler's cabin, but he kept on, and by ten

o'clock rode up to the little inn, and while the animals were soon safely housed in a warm stable, he found good quarters in the tavern and a kindly host.

"Well, Fox, my boy, you've made a great ride of it; but I don't blame yer, if it's to help poor Dave," said the landlord, who knew Fox well, having seen him often before.

Then he added:

"And you are just in time too, for there's a gent here ter see Dave, says he's his brother and a seafaring man that has come all the way to look him up."

"He expected to find Dave right here in the settlement, and was disappointed when he found he'd have to wait weeks maybe, before he could get to him, for there is no guide here who would make the trip for money now; but Dave's brother met Doctor Frank Powell, and he took him to his cabin, and there'll you find 'em."

"I'll go there now," said Fox.

"Git your supper first, and I'll go with you, and don't worry, for the Doctor will go, you bet, as he's not the man to hang back when a friend calls on him."

An hour after Fox got into the sled with the good-hearted landlord, who drove him to the cabin home of Doctor Frank Powell, formerly a surgeon in the army, but then practicing in that border settlement.

They found the Doctor at home, and with him a tall, dark-faced man, whom, from his resemblance to Dave, Fox knew to be the brother of the scout.

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE LEGACY.

DOCTOR FRANK POWELL was a tall, splendid-looking man, with a military bearing, and long black hair that gave a tender expression to his handsome face.

He had a comfortable home, and was called in the settlement the Magic Doctor and the Surgeon Scout, from the fact that he was a skilled physician, and had been noted as an Indian-fighter and trailer.

He greeted Fox in his pleasant way, and introduced him to Captain Dan Dudley, the brother of Dead Shot Dave, while he said:

"Captain, this brave boy has made the ride that men shrunk from, and he has left your brother ill, and wishes me to go to him."

"You are a noble boy, my son, and you have done bravely and well; but I will go back with you, as your report of my brother alarms me," said the sea-captain.

Then turning to Doctor Powell, he said:

"But will you go, sir?"

"Indeed I will, for Dave saved my life once, and even if he had not, I am never deaf to the call of one in distress."

"I find men of a brave stamp out here on the border, and boys, too, for I would never have believed it possible for this boy to accomplish what he has done," said Captain Dudley, frankly.

It was therefore arranged that they should all go to the inn and start from there at sunrise in the morning, the captain riding one of the Doctor's horses, and another animal being taken as a led pack-horse, with extra provisions and things that might be useful for the sick scout.

All then adjourned to the hotel and retired for the night, the landlord promising to start them off bright and early in the morning after a hot breakfast.

The morning was cold, and the wind blew a gale, but the little party set out upon their journey with determined hearts, and the horses, seeming to understand what was expected of them, bent low their heads and pressed on.

The Doctor had never been to the cabin of Dead Shot Dave, so it devolved upon Fox to be the guide.

As long as they followed the direct settlement trail it was plain traveling, but Fox had to search well for his own nearly obliterated tracks before he found them.

Then a halt was made for rest and dinner, for it was noon; a good fire was started, the horses were blanketed and fed, and thus an hour was passed.

Again starting on their way, Fox, mounted on the mule, let him have his head, and so surely did he go, that as night drew in they reached the timber wherein stood the deserted cabin.

The coals were still alive upon the hearth, and the Doctor and the sea-captain congratulated themselves upon such pleasant quarters for the night.

The captain had not ridden upon a horse since his boyhood life, and he ached from "keel to truck," as he expressed it, and was very glad to seek rest.

Fox set about getting supper, while Doctor Powell looked after wood, and the captain blanketed and fed the horses.

It was a bitter night, and the wind howled fiercely about the cabin and without all was bleak and frozen.

But the fire burned brightly within, the horses ate their supper in a contented way, and the flavor of broiling meats and steaming coffee made it a pleasant scene.

The captain asked Fox all about his brother, and how he had met him, and the boy told the story, and spoke in a very modest way of his part in the escape.

In fact Fox was so young that he lived in the present, and hoped for the future, while the past seemed but as a dream to him.

"And here I come nearly two thousand miles to see my brother, and find him ill.

"Well, so it happens; but I hope he'll soon get well, for we two are all that are left.

"I chose the sea and went as a cabin-boy when I was fifteen, and now I own and command my ship.

"Dave came West with some folks that emigrated from near where we lived, and a letter every Christmas has been all we've had and he wrote that to our sister and myself together.

"Sister died with consumption a year ago, and, being an old maid, she left Dave and me her farm, which our parents gave her, for we boys said we could do without it, and Dave must go East and live on the old place, for it brings in a good living, and I'll never give up the sea, as long as I am not obliged to do so from old age.

"Poor Dave, I hope he hain't going to follow sister Nancy."

"I guess we'll fetch him around all right," said Doctor Powell, and then the three sought their blankets for the night, and were soon fast asleep.

At dawn they were up, the horses were fed and watered, a warm breakfast was eaten, and they started out once more against the wintry winds, and to struggle through the deep snow.

The mule again led, with Fox on his back, and at noon the boy's first camp, on his way down was reached.

"Fox, you are a born guide, for no Indian could do better than you have," said Frank Powell, with admiration.

A short halt was made, and once more they pushed on.

At sunset they were yet some distance from the lone cabin of the scout, but after a rest of half an hour, as there was a snowstorm now threatening, they decided to push on the rest of the way that night.

Again Fox took the lead, and the intelligent mule started off in a direction that met the views of his young rider, for there was no trail now, and the night had come on dark and with driving snow.

Fox noted familiar outlines from time to time, and patted the faithful mule upon the neck, and on they went.

The storm increased in fury, and the snow was blinding, but the mule seemed to understand that to go right he must face it, and so he held on.

It was intensely cold, and, but for the preparations all had made, they would have frozen.

As for Fox, he sat upon the mule's back as snug in his blankets as though he was in bed, and yet his keen eyes were noting every object and watching the animal he bestrode to note any wavering as though at fault.

But, guided by Little Fox, the mule held on, struggling against the storm, and plunging through the deep snow, for he had to break the way.

"Are we not going at a venture in the blackness?" called out Captain Dudley from the rear.

"No, that boy and mule know just what they are doing, and my word that they will come out all right," replied the Doctor, who was ahead of the sailor.

Suddenly a shout broke from the lips of Fox, and the mule at the same time gave a joyful neigh.

A moment after Fox called back:

"There's the cabin!"

As they rode on there came in view a bright light on the hill, and the two brave men also gave a shout of joy.

Up the hillside they went, and while Doctor Powell dismounted near the cabin, to let the sick scout know that his brother had also arrived, Fox and the captain went on to the shanty to look to the comfort of the horses.

When Doctor Powell pushed the door open he beheld a bright log fire, which had sent its cheerful rays out through the window; for the

scout had opened the shutter to let the light shine forth.

Lying upon the bed was Dead Shot Dave, and his face was pale and pinched.

"Dave, old pard, I am here," cried the Doctor cheerily, advancing and grasping the outstretched hand.

"God bless you, Frank Powell; but the boy?" eagerly asked the scout.

"Is with me, and he has not his equal on the plains; but there is another with us that you will be glad to see, and he is now helping Fox with the horses, for it is a bitter night."

"Who is it, Doc?"

"An old friend from the East—in fact, one who came all this way to see you, and just in the nick of time to find you, by Fox coming after me."

"I'll bet a dozen pelts it's Dan Dudley, my brother."

"You'll win, for it is Captain Dudley."

"God be praised! for he will stay by me the little time I have to live."

"Bah! Don't talk that way, Dave, for I've come to make you well."

"It can't be done, Doc, for my lungs have given out; you know I was shot in the left lung once, and that makes it hard on me."

"I have had half a dozen hemorrhages, and I'm weak and no good."

"Well, we will see what can be done for you, Dave."

"No use, for I am as good as a dead man; but I thank Heaven I have my brother and you here with me and don't have to shadow that poor boy's life by dying alone with him; but here they come, and, as the dying scout spoke Captain Dudley and Fox entered the cabin."

Of the meeting of the brothers, and of Fox and the scout, I will not speak; but it was a most affecting one indeed, and a sad group it was when all felt that poor Dave must die, as Frank Powell had to admit there was no help for him.

And the words of the scout proved true, for two nights after the arrival of the party at the cabin he breathed his last, but not until he had left his brother a legacy.

That legacy was Fox, the Waif, and gladly did Captain Dudley promise to care for him through life.

Near the little cabin in the hills Dead Shot Dave was laid to rest, and then his brother, Frank Powell and Fox set out upon their return for the settlement.

Arriving in safety, Captain Dudley started for the East, and along with him went Fox, who was happy at the prospect of becoming a Boy Sailor, for his new guardian had promised to take him to sea with him.

Doctor Powell went with them to the station, and as the train was starting, called out:

"Remember, captain, if aught befalls you, leave Foxey to me as a legacy."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the old sailor, and the train glided swiftly away, bearing the boy whose life had been so full of strange fatalities.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOY SAILOR.

Fox, the waif, was of an age when sorrow rested lightly upon him.

He had a dim recollection of his parents, of his sweet-faced mother bending over him to bid him good-night, and that his home was a beautiful one, while he and his sister were so happy.

Then came death into the household; he saw his father, then his mother go from him, and his home was changed.

One day he and his sister had been playing on the lawn of their home, the servant having left them alone, when they were taken to drive by a stranger.

From that day they had not seen their home again; but the strange man treated them splendidly, said he was their new papa, and carried them far—far away.

He it was who had taken them to that house on the border, where Fox was left upon the prairie to die, or be killed by wolves.

Then came another guardian, the kind plainsman who had saved his life, and death had befallen him, too.

An Indian foster-father next, then Dave, the scout, and last Captain Dudley was his guardian.

All these scenes had left their indelible impression upon the heart and brain of the young boy, but yet he was not one to be cast down.

He took life as it came to him, clung to his new guardian with love, for the old sailor was kind to him, and he enjoyed the traveling upon

the cars, the scenery, the different towns, and all else.

After days of travel Captain Dudley and his boy companion arrived in New York, and they went at once to the merchant brig, which the sailor owned and commanded.

She was loading to go on a voyage to England and from thence to China, and back home again, so that Fox had the prospect of a two years' sea cruise before him, and he was greatly delighted.

The cabin was small, cosy and comfortable, and there were but two state-rooms in it, one of which was occupied by the first mate.

"Mr. Bradford, I have a youth with me who has been left to my care, and I intend to make a sailor out of him; but as he is very young, and I wish him near me, I will have to ask you to give him your berth in the cabin, while you take quarters with the other officers?"

"Certainly sir," was the reply of Nick Bradford; but from that moment poor little Fox had his undying hate, for the mate was a man to put on airs, and he had prided himself upon remaining in the cabin.

So Fox was installed in his new quarters, and was happy.

The brig bore the name of the Yankee Rover, and she was as trim a craft as sailed out of New York harbor.

Besides her captain and first and second mates, she had a crew of eight seamen, a negro cook and two Chinese stewards, who also did service as laundrymen and cabin boys, while they lent a hand when needed in working the craft.

As the brig was not to sail for a couple of weeks, Fox took that time to see the sights of the great metropolis, and to enjoy himself.

To do this he had ample money, for poor Dead Shot Dave had left him a couple of hundred dollars, while Doctor Powell had paid him as much more for Snowball, and a hundred for some pelts which the boy had laid up for sale.

So he was really well supplied with funds; but Captain Dudley told him to place that in a savings bank on interest, and gave him sufficient for his needs while in town.

With his bank-book in his pocket, calling for five hundred dollars, on six per cent. interest, and some twenty dollars in spending-money, Fox felt quite rich, and strutted around New York with the air of a millionaire.

With ample time on his hands, and of an inquiring mind, the boy then made discoveries which served him well in after years, as the reader will see.

At last the Yankee Rover was ready to sail, and one pleasant morning stood out of New York harbor, with Fox standing upon the quarter-deck, and perfectly delighted with all that he saw.

A clear head and excellent digestion caused the young sailor to escape sea-sickness, and he enjoyed every moment of the time spent on deck.

He was anxious to learn, and was wont to go to the maintop, and remain an hour at a time.

He never passed a sailor that he did not ask him some question as to the name of a rope, spar or sail, and he soon made himself thoroughly acquainted with the rigging of a brig.

The seamen all liked him, for he read to them when off watch, and often had something nice to give them, for Fox had laid in a good supply of sweetmeat stores for the voyage.

He was ever polite to the mates, but it could be seen that the first mate, Nick Bradford, had not forgiven him for being the cause of his having to leave the cabin.

He spoke gruffly to the boy when the captain was not around, and often kept silent when Fox asked him a question.

As for Captain Dudley, he had learned to love the boy as his own, and he devoted much time to teaching him the duties of a sailor, while he engaged the second mate, Fred Marsden, who was an educated young man, to teach him certain lessons in books for two hours each day.

The result was that little Fox was cramming his little head full of useful knowledge, and he had the ambition to some day become a sea-captain himself.

One day when Captain Dudley was lying down in his cabin, for he did not feel very well, Fox was on deck.

It was a rough day, the brig was staggering along, and the first mate held the deck.

He had given an order to one of the Chinese stewards, whom he did not appear to like, to go aloft for some purpose, when he could have sent a regular seaman.

Fox knew that Ding Dong, the Chinese, had a light head, and had once fallen overboard from

aloft, and he was surprised that Bradford sent him.

The Chinese seemed frightened at the order, for the brig was pitching badly, and the wind was blowing a gale, and he said pleadingly:

"Ding Dong habee bad head, and he fallee down pretty soon."

"What! do you refuse to go, you yellow heathen?"

"I'll teach you to mutiny," and the mate sprung toward the poor wretch, seized him by his long braid, and was dragging him to the mast to tie him there by his hair, when suddenly Fox darted forward.

"Mate Bradford, you shall not hurt that Chinese," he cried, grasping the arm of the seaman.

"What! do you dare interfere with me in my duty, boy?" cried the mate, and he struck the boy in the face.

Fox was agile as a cat, and possessed a strength that was remarkable in one of his years, while his hard life among the Indians had been of great service to him.

So, quick as a flash, he sprung upon the breast of the tall mate, clasping his legs about his arms, and seizing his throat in a grip of steel, he held him powerless, while he cried:

"Let go that poor Chinese, Mate Bradford, or I will choke you to death!"

The mate still had hold of the long braided hair of the Chinese, who was on his knees at the feet of the cruel sailor; but, feeling the small fingers going deeper into his throat, and gasping for breath, Nick Bradford released the Chinese.

Instantly the boy leaped back from the mate's breast; but as he did so, recovering himself as quickly as he could, the infuriated seaman bounded toward the boy.

But suddenly before him sprung the Chinese, a drawn knife in his hand, while he cried out:

"No hurtee 'Melican boy!"

There and then did Mate Nick Bradford prove that he was a coward, for he shrunk back from the Chinese, when he saw that he was armed.

He knew that he had not shown his teeth to save himself, but he was ready to bite to prevent his hurting the boy.

As he shrunk back, a thundering voice from aft shouted:

"What does this mean?"

It was Captain Dudley, and he stood in the companionway, only his head and shoulders visible.

Following his words he quickly came on deck, and advanced toward the mate.

Captain Dudley was a very popular man with his crew, and all had seen what had occurred, and waited breathlessly to see the result.

Nick Bradford turned livid, but said:

"I gave an order to that infernal Chinese, Captain Dudley, and he mutinied, and when I went to punish him that boy interfered, sprung upon me, and, knowing I would not harm him, he choked me, while the Chinese drew his knife and threatened me."

"Mate Bradford, had I not heard and seen all, I would have believed you a greatly abused man; but I was coming on deck, and I heard your order to that poor Chinese, whom you knew I gave orders should not be sent aloft."

"Before I could interfere the rest followed, and that boy, as you call him, but resented your blow, while Ding Dong, who did not resist to save himself, would have killed you to prevent your harming Fox."

"Don't let me see any more of this humor on your part ever again, sir."

"But you will punish the boy for striking me, and the Chinese for drawing his knife on me?" hotly said the mate.

"If I do, sir, I shall punish you for disobeying my orders in sending the Chinese aloft, in seizing hold of him as you did, for striking the boy, and last, for misinterpreting the whole affair to me."

"If they are punished, sir, you shall be, so what shall I do?"

"As you please, Captain Dudley," was the sullen reply of the crestfallen mate, who walked off, his hatred of Fox increased tenfold by what had passed.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

OWNING his vessel as he did, and with money for certain speculations, Captain Dudley was wont to sail from port to port where good cargoes offered.

Arriving in Liverpool, he shipped a cargo there for the Bosphorus, and went thence to Alexandria, in Egypt.

From there he returned to England, and then

sailed for India, touching at the Cape of Good Hope on the way.

Then to China, next to Japan, and from thence to Sydney, Australia, where the brig was laid up quite a while, undergoing a thorough overhauling.

From Sydney the Yankee Rover shipped a cargo for San Francisco, and after a month in that port set sail for home, stopping at Lima and Montevideo.

From the latter port she cleared for Havana, and thus more than three years had elapsed since she had left New York Harbor.

In all her cruising Fox had enjoyed himself greatly, and he was acknowledged to have become a most expert seaman, though a boy in years.

From the day of his difficulty with the mate that personage had completely changed his manner toward him, and after a while the two had become fast friends.

In the ports that the vessel had visited Fox had gone ashore and seen the wonders, and he began to feel that he was quite a traveler.

After leaving Montevideo the brig was caught in a fearful storm,

Captain Dudley was below, for he was by no means a well man, as the same disease that had carried off his mother and sister was making headway with him.

Fox had been seated in the cabin with him, as was his wont, reading or talking to him, when the captain said:

"We'll be in Havana a week or so, Fox, and then ship a cargo for New Orleans, and there get a load of cotton for New York, and it will have been a prosperous voyage, for I have made money steadily."

"I am glad to hear it, sir, for you will be able to take the rest you deserve," responded Fox.

"Let me see, you are now about thirteen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Fox, you have been a good son to me, and I bless the day that my brother Dave left me such a legacy in you."

"I wish you to go to my old home with me, and spend some time, and I'll get a tutor to take care of your studies, for I wish you to go to the naval school at Annapolis and become an officer."

"You are a good sailor, and you've seen lots of the world, while I think you are ahead of most boys of your age in book learning, so you'll pass all right."

"I'll talk to our congressman about an appointment for you, and you'll get it, I know."

"You are very kind, Father Dan," said Fox.

"You will get all I have, Fox, the farm, what my sister left, what poor Dave had put away in bank, and all I have saved up, and it won't be long, I'm thinking, before you get your inheritance, for consumption has claimed many of my name before me, and it's got a grip on me now."

"I hope not, Father Dan, and I hope you will live many years yet to enjoy your fortune."

"It hain't such a big fortune, Fox, only about a hundred thousand all told; but in the years before you reach twenty-one, it will be half that much more, and you'll be pretty well fixed, and I will feel I've done my duty by you."

"Ah, Father Dan, indeed you have; you have been to me all an own father could be, and I hope to show you how I appreciate it some day; but hark! there comes a tempest upon us, and I will go on deck," and Fox hastened out of the cabin, for suddenly had swept down upon the brig one of those sudden hurricanes so often disastrous to vessels in the lower latitudes.

By courtesy Fox was dubbed the third mate, and the boy mate, and when he reached the deck, he took his stand to see if he could be of any service.

But Mate Bradford already had the brig stripped to meet the tempest, and the men at their posts, for he was a thorough seaman, whatever might be his other faults.

The night was inky black, the sea was wild with fury, and the wind was terrific; but the good brig had weathered many a severe gale in the past few years, and no one doubted her ability to get through this one all right.

But the hurricane increased so in violence, that, sick as he was, Captain Dudley went on deck.

Hardly had he reached the deck, when a huge wave boarded forward and swept aft with resistless fury.

Cries of alarm went up on all sides, and there came in the deep voice of the captain, the warning:

"Hold hard all, or death awaits you!"

On swept the wave, and, with a wild shriek

Ding Dong let go his hold and was borne along on its bosom.

Then it reached Captain Dudley, who, though he held on hard, was weak from sickness, and was dragged loose.

"Good-by all! farewell my boy!" came back out of the darkness, mingling with the shrieks of the Chinese, and then the two were borne off on the black waters.

"Man overboard! save them, lads, for God's sake!" cried Fox, unmindful of his own danger.

But there came the response from the boatman:

"No use tryin', boy mate, for nothing can save 'em."

"We may not be able to save the brig, Fox, and ourselves," said the first mate, and loud rung his orders to his crew, for the vessel was in deadly peril.

But, after awhile the seas became less heavy, the wind did not blow so savagely, and the brig was safe.

With deep grief in his heart the boy went into the deserted cabin, and bitterly did he mourn for the good man who had gone.

"All who love me, and care for me, seem fated to die," he said, as he recalled his parents, the plainsman, Dead Shot Dave and Captain Dudley, while, as his thoughts turned to the man who had so cruelly deserted him upon the plains, he continued in a sad voice:

"I wish I knew what had happened to papa Bancroft, that caused him to leave me alone in the camp that night?"

"I guess Indians killed him."

"Well, I'll be afraid to let any one else care for me, if I bring them only death in return for their love."

"Ah me! what shall I do now?"

It was a long time before Fox closed his eyes in slumber that night, and his face wore an intensely sad look the next day, as did in fact the faces of all the crew.

That morning, as the brig was gliding swiftly along on her course, Fox said to the first mate:

"Mister Bradford, I wish you would come into the cabin and take Father Dan's place, while we ought to fix up his papers."

"If you wish it, Fox, I will; but I suppose you are his heir?"

"Yes, sir, he so said; but I'd gladly be poor all my life to have him back again."

"You are a good boy, Fox, and I am glad we are friends now, for we misunderstood each other at first."

"Don't speak of it, sir," and the two entered the cabin.

The papers were looked over, and there were among them, besides a list of his property, a memoranda that he was to leave his *protege* and adopted son, Foxwell Dudley, all he possessed.

This was all upon that subject.

There was another paper, which was a bill of sale of the brig, the name being left blank, as well as the price, but it was signed by Daniel Dudley, and both Fox and the first mate knew that it had been the captain's intention to sell the vessel upon arriving in New York to the first good purchaser.

"We'll seal them all up, Fox, and you can put your seal and name upon them, and I'll go with you to a lawyer on our arrival in New Orleans, our first American port, and make known that Captain Dudley left you his heir."

There was a list of three names mentioned as cousins of Captain Dudley, and they were to have a thousand dollars each as a legacy, but Fox was to get all the rest, and the old seaman so stated in the memorandum he left.

The papers were put together, sealed by both the mate and Fox, and then Mr. Bradford moved into the cabin, the crew, who still did not like him, making remarks to the effect:

"He's got there at last, and the boy mate better keep his weather-eye open, for that Nick Bradford is a devil-fish."

At last the port of Havana was reached, and "Captain" Bradford, as he now insisted upon being called, went on shore to report.

When he came back, he said the brig would be there for a couple of weeks, and he constantly invited Fox to go ashore with him, to the theater, and other places of amusement.

The cargo was in the mean time taken out, and another shipped, and the Yankee Rover was ready to sail, when Fox had not come on board.

Going ashore the mate made inquiries about him, but could learn nothing regarding his fate, and so the vessel was detained.

That night, and the next day the brig awaited while Nick Bradford and others made search for the missing boy; but all without avail, and, leaving the matter in the hands of the

police, the mate was forced to set sail, for his cargo was of a perishable nature.

Thus the Yankee Rover put to sea leaving Fox, the boy mate behind, and his fate unknown.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUSPICION OF TREACHERY.

WHEN Fox had gone ashore from the brig, the day of his mysterious disappearance, it had been to have a parting look at the city of Havana.

He had strolled about the streets for awhile, and then gone into a *cafe* to get something to eat.

As he came out a man came up to him, who had the appearance of being a sailor, and asked in fair English:

"Are you the young *senor* from the Yankee brig?"

"Yes, I am from the American brig Yankee Rover," responded Fox in fair Spanish, for he had studied and picked up several languages.

"The *Senor* Bradford is captain of your vessel?"

"Yes."

"I went on board the brig for you, and have since been looking for you, as the *Senor* Captain has met with an accident."

"Indeed! I will hasten on board at once."

"No, *senor*, he is not on the brig, but at the home of my brother."

"Come with me."

Fox hastily followed the man, and was led toward a low quarter of the town.

"How did the accident happen, sir?" he asked.

"He knew my brother, came to bid him farewell, and fell down the stone steps, hurting himself severely."

"I am very sorry," said Fox, and he followed the guide into a wine-shop, and through it to a rear room.

Ere he could utter a word he was seized, bound and gagged, and a short while after found himself in a dark, dismal room, lying upon a mat.

The gag was taken from his mouth, but he was still bound, and there he lay, wondering what it all meant, until darkness settled over the city.

Then the door opened, and two men entered.

Ere he could ask them a question, he was again gagged, and taking him up they bore him out into an alleyway.

A short walk brought them to the water's edge, and there a boat awaited them.

Into this the men got with their prisoner, and soon after he was taken on board a small schooner, which at once got under way.

Her crew were dark-faced Spaniards, and her captain a man with an evil, cunning face.

Once on board the schooner he had been taken below, and an hour after the captain came into the cabin, took the gag from his mouth and said, speaking in broken English:

"I have six men on my vessel, and none of them speak English, so I will know if you tell them other than I say you may."

"I have been paid to drop you overboard at sea; but if you do as I tell you, I will spare your life and care for you."

"If you tell the men that you had run away from me because you wished to stay in Havana, and I had you brought back, all will be well, and you can live; if you tell them otherwise, you will go overboard!"

"This is my vessel, and I have a new crew, and I want a good boy like you to wait on me, so will take good care of you."

"What will you do?"

"I don't wish to be tossed overboard, so will obey you, *senor*; but who paid you to get rid of me?"

"I do not know nor do I care, for I got my money; but he is one of your countrymen."

"Ah! I think I can guess who."

"I don't care, so go to work."

"What shall I do, *senor*?"

"Anything—everything."

And with this, the Spaniard took off the iron handcuffs from the boy's wrists.

"Where are you bound, *senor*?"

"It matters not to you, so get forward and tell the cook I want my supper."

Fox was a good reader of human nature, and he did not doubt but that it was just as the Spaniard said, that he had been hired to lose him overboard at sea; and so he determined to make himself useful with as good a grace as possible, and he hastened to obey the command given him.

The destination of the schooner proved to be Vera Cruz, and in that port she remained some ten days, the Spaniard taking Fox with him

whenever he went ashore, but never allowing him to get out of his sight.

But Fox was a creature of circumstances, and he seemed as happy as a lark with the Spaniard as his master.

Upon leaving Vera Cruz, the schooner sailed for Jamaica, and from thence among a number of the West Indian Island ports.

Several times the Spanish captain changed his crew, but he seemed to have taken a great fancy to the boy, who held the position of sailor, cabin-boy, valet and boatswain on board the schooner.

The Spaniard was a small trader, in his way, and he found that Fox understood pretty well how to drive a bargain, and one day he was advised by the boy to sail for some American port, buy a cargo of odds and ends, and sell them at large profits to the natives of the islands.

The captain thought this excellent advice, and he headed for Mobile and made the purchases.

While in port he watched Fox like a hawk: but the boy seemed perfectly contented with his lot, and sailed in the schooner, though he certainly could have escaped had he made an effort to do so.

There was one thing the Spaniard did that the boy did not advise him upon, and that was to run into some secret harbor on the island coasts of the West Indies and sell his goods without passing them through the Custom-houses.

This Fox knew was smuggling, for he had learned all about the clearance of a vessel, and reporting, upon leaving and arriving in a port, and the customs laws of the different countries.

The result of the venture was so far beyond the anticipations of the Spaniard, that he determined to try it again, but to make the cruise doubly lucrative.

To this end he bought goods, which he thought would find a ready sale in the United States, and set sail for Charleston, South Carolina, where he had a Cuban friend engaged in business, and whom, from his remembrance of him, he did not doubt but that he could get to help him get rid of a cargo without paying duty thereon.

So into Charleston Harbor he went, under plea of "stress of weather," and pretending to be bound for Boston.

He went ashore, carrying Fox with him, and readily found his friend, the result of which was to land his cargo at a certain point, where his friend would have it returned to the city.

As Fox was now looked upon as a kind of a "right bower," and believed to be wholly satisfied with his lot, the Spaniard allowed him to go alone to look about the city, while he was discussing the business matter with his friend.

The result of this was that Fox determined to escape, and the moment he got away from the presence of the Spaniard, he put his determination into practice by hastening to a clothing store and rigging himself out in a new outfit, for the suit he had on was considerably the worse for wear.

He had, through all, held on to his bank-book, which he had gotten in New York nearly five years before, and he had, besides, some sixty dollars in cash.

This served him well, for it enabled him to fit himself up, and also pay for a cabin passage upon the New York steamer, which he was not long in doing, and fortunately was just in time, for she sailed that afternoon.

Standing on the deck of the steamer as she went down the harbor, Fox discovered that she would almost shave the Cuban schooner as she went by, and he at once placed himself in a conspicuous position on the vessel.

He saw the Spaniard pacing the deck in a seemingly anxious manner, and watching the shore, while he also discovered that the small boat was absent from the schooner with two of her crew, for but five were visible on deck.

"They are searching for me, and the captain is scared."

"Now, I'll scare him worse," said Fox, and as the steamer overshadowed the schooner, he hailed in Spanish:

"*Ho, El Capitan Torador!*"

The Spaniard started at hearing his name called, glanced up at the boy and recognized him, for a curse broke from his lips.

"I have asked the captain of the revenue-cutter to give you a call," continued Fox, in Spanish, and the steamer swept on, while the Spaniard seemed to be going crazy, as did his crew, for they sprung to and fro, sails were set, the anchor was run up, and quickly she headed seaward.

Fox laughed heartily, while the steamer's captain, who had heard the hail, but did not understand what was said, and saw the excitement on board the schooner, approached Fox, and said:

"You know that vessel, my lad?"

"Yes, sir."

"You spoke Spanish, and your words seemed to have given them a terrible scare."

"Yes, sir," and Fox laughed again, while he said:

"I came to Charleston in that vessel, and her captain did not treat me well."

"He is a Spaniard and ignorant of the American laws, and so I told him the revenue cutter would pay him a visit, and he must be afraid to stand inspection, as he is running off."

"Yes, a guilty conscience needs no accuser; but you have scared him half out of his wits; but where are you from, my lad?"

"I hardly know, sir, as I have been cruising about the world for five years, but am now bound to New York."

"You are a young traveler."

"Yes, sir, but I have seen a great deal in my time," and Fox spoke with no intention of boasting.

He had made up his mind now to keep his own secrets, and so the captain only got out of him that his adopted father had been lost overboard at sea, and that he was returning home, as he called New York City, for it did seem like home to him, to be going back to the place he had started from.

The captain found he was an experienced sailor, in spite of his years, and took quite a fancy to him; but Fox would say nothing more about himself than he had, and upon the arrival of the steamer in New York he went on shore and sought a hotel where he could stop for a while, until he could find out where the Yankee Rover was, and if his suspicions against Mate Nick Bradford were correct.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MATE'S PLOT.

It was nearly night when Fox reached the hotel, so he felt that he could do nothing that evening to find out about the brig, so he went to the theater, enjoyed the entertainment and then returned to his room and retired.

The rumble of wheels awakened him, and at first he thought it was the roar of the waves, and that he was at sea; but he soon remembered all, and after breakfast started out to find the agents of the brig.

He did not know either their name or number, and so had to go out and hunt them up by his memory of the place the brig sailed from.

He began at the Battery and walked along the East River until at last he came to a place that looked familiar.

Here he halted and asked a man if a brig named the Yankee Rover had been in port lately?

The man thought that he remembered the name, but told him he could find out in the office.

So to the office he went and made the inquiry.

"Yes, the Yankee Rover was here, and as her captain was lost overboard, and her mate had bought the brig, he had cleared in her for some eastern port, and that is all I know," said the clerk.

"The mate had bought the brig?" asked Fox.

"Yes."

"How can I find out where she cleared for?"

"At the Custom-house."

"Will you give me the date of her sailing, as near as you can, sir?"

The clerk complied and Fox left for the clearance office.

He discovered that the A No. 1 merchant brig Yankee Rover, Nicholas Bradford owner and captain, had cleared for Portsmouth, New Hampshire with an assorted cargo.

"I'll go after her," quietly said Fox, and then he sought the Savings Bank, produced his book, was recalled by the cashier, in spite of the years that had passed since he made his deposit, and was paid over the interest upon the Five Hundred, all he asked for, and which amounted to nearly two hundred dollars.

Feeling himself rich, Fox started for Portsmouth, and upon arrival there found that the Yankee Rover had been there, remained in port some time, while her captain had gone inland on a visit of a couple of weeks, and then had sailed, with his vessel in ballast only, for Baltimore, where he said it was his intention to sell the brig.

"He went to see some folks, cousins of his captain, who had been lost overboard at sea," explained one man.

Fox had heard Captain Dudley speak of his cousins, and knew where they dwelt, while he was aware that they were the ones who had been remembered in the seaman's memorandum, to get a thousand dollars each.

Arriving there, he had learned that they had taken possession of their new inheritance, the Dudley Farm, left them by their cousin, Captain Dan Dudley.

To the farm Fox went and his visit was not a pleasant one, for Nick Bradford had brought them papers that gave them the fortune of their kinsman, and told them that the captain came very near leaving all to a vagabond boy whom he had picked up, but whom he, Bradford, had cleverly gotten rid of in Havana by sailing without him.

The mate also stated that he had purchased the brig from the captain, and paid him well.

Such was the story that Fox heard, and he was warned to clear out and be seen no more in those parts, under pain of being arrested for stealing from his benefactor.

Then there came upon the poor waif a proof of the heartlessness of the world, and with a sad heart he did "clear out."

He was too young to care for the good captain's money; but had hoped for kindness and sympathy from those who got it.

He realized that the mate had gotten rid of him to shield himself in his steal of the brig, for he had filled in the blank in the bill of sale with his name, and he had put the captain's cousins in the way of securing the fortune as the direct heirs, and thus kept them from inquiring of him what Captain Dudley had done with the money received from him for the brig.

All these things Fox saw, and it made him determined to track to the end the Yankee Rover and her treacherous commander.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOLLOWING A SEA TRAIL.

HAVING made up his mind not to be beaten by Nick Bradford, Fox set out for Baltimore.

He had the good sense to husband his financial resources, and so had ample left for his purpose.

He visited all the wharves of the city, and then set out on a tour of the shipping-houses.

When he was about to come to the conclusion that Bradford had not put in at Baltimore, he recognized the brig at a glance lying at a lumber wharf some distance away.

Instantly he went there, rowing across in a harbor boat.

He landed at the wharf, and then boarded the brig.

Not a familiar face greeted him, and upon asking for her captain he was sent into the cabin.

A stout, red-faced man greeted him, a man with a frank, kindly look, and he said bluntly:

"Well, lad, are you in search of Captain Doolittle?"

"I am looking for the captain of this brig, sir."

"You need go no further."

"Is not this the Yankee Rover, sir?"

"It was."

"And is not now?"

"It was the Yankee Rover, and now it is the Yankee Girl, for I changed her name when I bought her."

"You own her now, sir?"

"Yes, lad; but is there anything wrong?"

"Not exactly, sir; but I sailed on this brig for five years, and her captain was Daniel Dudley, sir; but he was lost overboard in a storm, and the first mate took charge, and left me in Havana."

"I see, he is the one I bought her from, and his name is Nicholas Bradford."

"Yes, sir."

"He bought the craft from Dudley, and I seeing her, found her just to my liking, and invested about all my little savings in her, which amounted to eighteen thousand dollars."

"Where did you see her, sir?"

"I was on a chartered vessel, a fast sailer going to Norfolk, and this brig just walked by us as though we were dragging an anchor."

"When I reached Norfolk she was there, and I quickly bought her, and then, fitting her up, I ran East for a cargo of lumber for a Baltimore firm, and got in last night."

"Anything more I can tell you, lad?"

"I'd like to know what became of Mate Bradford, sir?"

"I am afraid he's gone to the bad, for he went to drinking and gambling, and my mate told me he had thrown away at cards in two nights, what it took me years and years to earn and save."

"It seemed to me that he had a bad conscience, lad, for he looked it."

"I did not know that he had any conscience, sir; but I would like to find him if I could."

"Boy, that man has treated you badly."

"He has not treated me right, sir; but could you tell me how I would be able to find him?"

"I'll tell you a place he went to gamble, and you may find him there; it was at the Forecastle Inn, at Norfolk."

"Thank you, sir."

"Say, my lad, don't you want a berth on your old vessel?"

"I have something to do just now, sir; but I would like to know where to find you at another time, for you might want a lad then?"

"Yes, here is my address, and when you want a berth look me up," and putting the slip of paper away Fox left the brig.

That same day he took the steamer down the Chesapeake to Norfolk, and the next day found him at the Forecastle Inn.

It was a headquarters for seamen, and by no means a desirable place for one who valued his reputation.

The landlord, an evil-faced man, eyed the boy sharply as he entered, and asked gruffly:

"Well; what do you want here?"

Fox saw that he would have to be very circumspect, so he said quietly:

"I was looking for Captain Nick Bradford."

"What do you want with him?"

"I sailed with him once, and I'm out of a berth now."

"Ah! well, he's not here."

"He was here, sir."

"Yes, and stayed until he lost all of his money, like the fool he is, and then he shipped."

"Do you know where he went, sir?"

"To New York, I think."

"Thank you, sir."

"Do you intend to go to New York to find him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you like to go by a nice vessel that sails to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you the money to pay your way?"

"Yes, sir."

"It will cost you, for a berth and meals, in the cabin, ten dollars."

"All right, sir."

"Pay me the money, and I'll give you the order for the berth, one I was going to take myself, only I find I cannot go."

Fox took out fifteen dollars, all he had left of his interest money, and paid the amount demanded, when the landlord wrote an order to the captain of the schooner to give the lad his berth, engaged and paid for.

So the boy left the inn, and started out to find the schooner, which the landlord had said was as trim a craft as floated, and had a captain, mate and crew of five men.

The schooner was found, and it only took a glance to see that she did not come anywhere near the description given of her.

But Fox concluded that he could stand it as a passenger, especially as he had but a few dollars left with which to reach New York.

The skipper said the order was all right, showed him to his berth, and told him to be on board by six o'clock, as he would sail then.

Having five or six hours upon his hands, Fox roamed about the city and followed a handsome road leading out into the country.

Suddenly he came to a handsome place and stopped suddenly.

It was an old mansion, solidly built, surrounded by beautiful grounds, and with a massive gateway leading into the driveway.

The boy gazed a moment in suspense, and then said:

"I've seen a picture of this place somewhere."

He stood like one dazed, and after a while said aloud:

"Oh! when have I seen this place?"

Again he moved forward, and his eyes were riveted upon every object, slowly, and with memory rushing back upon him.

"There is the pond where the swans used to swim, and the summer-house—and the arbor—and the mound—and—but something I do not see that it seems to me should be there."

"What is it, I wonder?"

"Ah!" and he fairly shouted the words:

"It is my little sister!"

Throwing himself down upon the grassy mound near the gate the boy burst into tears, for suddenly back into his memory came the faces of his dead parents, the dismal funeral, and his sister, all making up the scene of his once happy home.

"Here, get up from there; for you are hiding to wait your chance to get into the grounds and make your way to the orchard."

The voice was gruff, and Fox sprung to his feet.

It was evidently the gardener of the place that confronted him.

"You needn't to cry and try and look innocent, for I know you, boys."

"I am no thief, sir, and I just walked out here from the town to wait until my vessel was ready to sail, and it looks so like my old home, a mere picture I have seen, that it made me cry."

"Don't talk nonsense to me, boy, for I know your eyes were on the peaches over yonder."

"Come, I don't want you hanging around here."

"Who lives here? Please tell me."

"It is none of your business."

"See here, man, I am not one you can drive or frighten."

"This is a public road and I have a right here, and I shall go up to the mansion and ask if you refuse to tell me," and Fox drew himself up, and there was that in his face that made the man feel that he was not an ordinary vagabond, as he had believed.

But he said:

"You shall not go to the house or I will set the dogs on you; now be off, or I'll thrash you," and the man picked up a stick.

When he again faced the boy he saw that he was covered by a revolver.

"My man, you began this quarrel, and before you shall strike me I will kill you!"

"You cannot drive me, you cannot frighten me, and if you do not care to tell me who lives here I will go to the mansion and find out, for I am determined to know, and I shall also report your insolence to your master."

The man was cowed, for he knew that he was wrong.

He was also an arrant coward, as all bullies are, and he feared the pistol, so he said:

"Judge Beverley lives here."

"How long has he lived here?"

"Two years."

"And who before him?"

"The Kennons."

"How long were they here?"

"I do not know; but they only rented it."

"Do you know to whom the place belonged six or eight years ago?"

"No I don't."

"Thank you," and Fox passed on up the road.

He walked by the grand old place, still gazing at the grounds and surroundings, and then passed back again toward the city, his heart sad, his thoughts busy, while he muttered:

"Somehow this place brings back to me my little sister."

"Let me see, I left her one day, away out West, and the man who told us to call him papa, left me in a camp on the prairie and I never saw him again, or little sister either."

"I believe I could find her, and I will try, for that good Doctor Powell would help me, I know he would, and where we lived was not so very far from him, and I know it was near the home which was burned and the good people killed, when the Indians carried me off."

"Yes, I'll try and find my little sister, for the memory of the past comes back to me now; but I will try and find Nick Bradford first, and I'll report just what he did, for Father Dan had not sold him the brig, and he paid that Spanish captain five hundred dollars to kill me."

Thus, as memory of the past, lying dormant for years, now began to awaken in the boy's mind, he walked back to the town, and went on board the schooner, which soon after got under way.

As it headed down the harbor, and Fox was standing upon the quarter-deck, the captain shouted out to him:

"Come, boy, get forward there with the men and go to work, for I'll have no gents aboard my craft."

"I paid my way, sir, and am a passenger, not a seaman," was the indignant reply.

"You do as I say, or I'll make it hot for you, and mind you, boy, you sleep and eat forward too with the men, for I want no young gents in my cabin."

"Do you hear?"

Fox knew what was best for him, and he went forward and went to work without a murmur, and thus faded away his "first-class cabin passage to New York," which he had paid the landlord of the Forecastle Inn for.

But such ups and downs are of daily occurrence in the life of a young sailor, and Fox was too much of a seaman not to take matters as they came, with a light heart, and make the best of everything, good or bad as the case might be.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PLANTATION PIRATES.

"THIS are ther coast, mates, whar I hes neerd thar is a gang o' watermen as is called Plantation Pirits."

The remark was made by a seaman on board

the Lucy Loper, the schooner on which Fox the Waif had taken passage to New York, to find himself sent before the mast to do service there.

The craft was little better than a tub, and her captain and crew were a rough set, as Fox had found out the first hour he was aboard.

She had beaten out of the Chesapeake, rounded Cape Charles, and the next afternoon lay becalmed off the Virginia Coast, which was distant about a mile.

The anchor had been let fall, her skipper was asleep on a blanket, spread on the deck, and the crew were forward talking together, when one of them made the remark that opens this chapter.

"Yes, I has heerd o' them fellows, and they say they is too smart to be picked up."

"Sometimes it's a vessel, like we is, becalmed, and they rob it, and then it's a fancy yacht, while at other times they pounce upon some home near the shore and get a rich haul," remarked another of the crew.

"Guess they'd not get much from this craft," a third said.

"No, we can sleep in peace," a fourth added.

Fox heard the remarks of the men, as he stood leaning over the bulwark of the schooner, gazing shoreward, and he muttered to himself:

"I guess the Plantation Pirates cannot be much worse than these men, and I wouldn't care if they did come aboard of us and give that old captain a scare; but then there's no such luck."

Soon after all had turned in, except the one man on watch, and he was half-asleep, evidently, for, had he been awake he would certainly have noticed two boats coming toward the schooner.

Nearer and nearer they came, and he did not wake up until the boats were alongside and their crews were on deck.

Then he awoke to drop dead under a blow from one of the boarders.

"Down into the hold there, men, and remember, dead men tell no tales, but the captain I wish to see," said a stern-faced man, turning to the men at his back.

The men divided into two parties, and one went below forward, the other into the cabin.

In a short while two persons came upon deck, and one said:

"Captain, the crew is done for, but here is a smart-looking boy I did not let 'em kill."

It was Fox, and he faced the man pale, but with fearless mien, for as the lantern was flashed in his face he did not flinch.

"Who are you, boy?" asked the man addressed as captain, and who was tall, and with a heavily-bearded face.

"I am only an unfortunate boy, sir," was the reply.

"Ah! you are one of the crew of this craft?"

"I was made to serve as such, sir, though I paid my money as cabin-passenger."

"I see. Well, if I spare your life, will you be willing to serve me?"

"I can only say yes, sir, for I do not wish to die."

"You are a smart boy, and I will trust you."

"Keep your eye on him, Rooke, and bring him into the cabin."

The man obeyed, as a seaman had said the captain of the schooner was a prisoner.

Entering the cabin, the bold leader of the boarders of the schooner beheld the captain, and a glance at his face was sufficient to show that he was terribly frightened.

"This schooner is the Lucy Loper, is it not?" sternly asked the captor.

"Yes, sir," came in quivering tones.

"I am glad to catch you so easily, for you have become becalmed right off my retreat."

"Who are you?" gasped the schooner's skipper.

"I am called the Hermit Pirate, my friend, and I command a fleet little craft, known as the Sea Sneak."

"It is a fishing-smack, or rather so considered, but as fishing only pays us a small sum, we eke out an existence by robbing houses, and now and then catching a vessel, which, after we have met her, is put down in the annals as having gone down at sea with all on board."

"Now, my dear captain, I was about to sail in my Sea Sneak to head you off, as I knew you were to sail, from a spy who brought me some valuable information regarding you; but he recognized your vessel when it became becalmed here, and so we came out in our boats."

"And why did you come?"

"Simply to relieve you of a valuable cargo you have on board."

"I have only vegetables for the New York market."

"You have a cargo of vegetables, I admit,

my dear captain; but you have also some boxes, shipped by the landlord of the Forecastle Inn."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the man.

"He is a robber leader, and the booty obtained by burglaries of his men he hoards up until he can ship it to New York and dispose of it."

"He gets you to take it, and so I want the booty and will have it, while you go to the bottom with your vessel, which I will scuttle, and she will be reported as 'gone down in a gale with all on board.'"

"Now, men, the captain has those boxes in his cabin, so get them into the boats, and then knock a hole in the schooner and let her go under."

Fox was horrified at the command of the pirate, vile as he was; but it did not take him long to find out that the man meant just what he said, for his crew brought a dozen boxes out of the schooner and put them in the boats belonging to the vessel.

Then the man Rooke led Fox into one of their own boats, which took the two bearing the booty in tow, and pulled landward.

The captain and his men remained upon the schooner, and soon Rooke remarked:

"The deed is done and she'll go down, for there comes the boat."

The second boat soon pulled alongside, and as she did so, Fox, looking back at the schooner, saw her masts sway to and fro and then go down, a deep roar following, as the waters swept over her.

"She will sink out of sight, captain?" asked Rooke.

"Yes, there will be ten fathoms above her topmast."

"And her captain?"

"Went with her," was the calm reply, as the boat pulled on, the chief calling back:

"Keep a good lick, lads, for we wish to be well out of here before dawn, as we are getting a breeze now."

Half an hour after the boats pulled alongside of a small schooner, and certainly a model craft for speed and seaworthy qualities.

The captain had gone into his cabin, the boat had been swung off the davits, and the booty from the other boats was soon on board, after which they were sunk.

Rooke, who was an officer, now got the schooner under way, and she stood seaward, Fox remaining on deck with him.

Fox was standing in the waist, watching the moon rise out of the sea, and Rooke walked forward and said:

"Mate Bradford will soon be on deck, as his watch begins at midnight, and then I'll take you below and show you your bunk, near mine."

"Thank you, sir; but that name seems familiar to me."

"What name?"

"Mate Bradford."

"He is a new man the captain picked up in Norfolk, when he was last there."

"He won all the man's money in card-playing, and finding he was a good sailor, and a gentlemanly sort of fellow, he took a fancy to him and gave him the berth of second mate; but what is the matter, my lad?"

"Nothing, sir, only I know Mate Bradford, I guess, and if you will only let me walk toward him when he comes on deck, I think you will see that he knows me."

Rooke looked at the boy in surprise, but answered:

"All right, do as you please; but what you mean by it, I do not understand— There he comes now."

As the mate spoke a man came out of the cabin and stood looking around him.

The moon was now up, and shone brightly upon the schooner, which was gliding along under a five-knot breeze.

The sky was clear, and the vessel stood out in bright relief.

At the helm stood a seaman, and forward were four men, evidently the watch.

In the waist were Rooke, the first mate and Fox.

As the moonlight fell upon the man who had just come from the cabin, it revealed the form and face of Mate Nick Bradford, of the Yankee Rover.

Instantly Fox walked toward him, and, the moon shining directly in the boy's face, it was revealed distinctly to the mate.

As his eyes fell upon him, he uttered a cry of terror, started back, waved his hands and cried:

"Great God! it is the boy's ghost, and I am a haunted man through life!"

Still Fox advanced in silence, for at last he was face to face with the man who had so wronged him, and hired the Spanish skipper to kill him.

He uttered no word, but stretched forth his hand to accuse the man of his crime, when, with another wild shriek of terror, which brought the captain and crew of the schooner rushing on deck, he turned and sprung overboard into the sea.

"Man overboard!" was the loud cry in a chorus of voices, and the schooner was luffed quickly and lay to.

Then a boat was lowered and a search was made, but not one on the deck had seen him rise after he sunk from sight.

"In the deuce's name what does it all mean?" cried the captain.

"The second mate, sir, got scared of a boy and jumped overboard," answered Rooke.

"I half-believed he would kill himself, for he seemed troubled by some great crime."

"What a fool a man is to have a conscience."

"This boy scared him, sir."

"I did not think he would do what he did; but he thought I was a ghost, I guess, for he paid a man to kill me," said Fox.

"Ah, come into my cabin, my boy, for you have a history, I guess, and I would like to know it," and the captain led the boy aft, while he said:

"I'll look after him, Rooke, and give him Bradford's bunk, if he is not afraid he'll see his ghost."

"No, sir, I am not afraid of ghosts," was the answer of Fox, and he followed the outlaw into the cabin.

"Now, my lad, what have you to say for yourself?"

Fox simply related what he cared to, speaking of Captain Dudley taking him to sea in the Yankee Rover, and of his trouble with Nick Bradford, the long voyage of the brig, the death of his father, for he so spoke of him, and the way the mate tried to get rid of him, and how he took the brig for himself.

"Well, my lad, you are avenged; but I want you with me, now."

"As you see, this is a plain fishing craft, and we fish for a living; but we make extra money in another way, too, as you have seen to-night."

"Stay with me, and I'll be a father to you, for I like you."

"What do you say?"

Again the boy's shrewdness came to his aid, for he saw that he could do nothing else.

"I don't mind, sir, for I haven't got any home, or any one to help me; but I hate to be a pirate," he answered.

"Bah! no one knows this craft as such."

"True, no one can account for the deeds of outlawry done on this craft, yet no one can say who is guilty."

"You see we are bound together in a way that none of us can turn traitors, and, as we allow no one to live to appear against us, if we board a craft we escape all right."

"Rooke spared you, and I am glad of it, for I like you."

"Now tell me if you are to be one of us?"

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"Good! now go to bed, and yonder is your bunk, and it was Bradford's, but I guess his ghost won't disurb you."

Fox laughed, and was soon in bed; but before he slept he had made up his mind to escape as soon as possible from the piratical gang and go West to look up his sister, who was now almost constantly in his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOXLEY THE VAGABOND.

THOUGH Fox had made up his mind as to his duty, and what he would do, after he became one of the Plantation Pirate's crew, he did not find it easy to accomplish by any means.

The captain found him to be exceedingly intelligent and precocious for his years, and it was not a very short while before Fox made all understand that he was as good a sailor for his years as ever trod a deck.

This caused the men to feel an admiration for him, young as he was, and the captain called him his boy lieutenant.

Now and then the schooner would run up to Baltimore, again she would go to Norfolk, and then to Richmond, always carrying a cargo of fish, and finding ready sale therefor; but Fox knew that she carried other booty, which the captain was wont to go ashore and dispose of, to some secret agents, and have returned by night.

On these visits Fox was never allowed ashore, so he knew that he was not trusted.

Upon the Atlantic Coast of Virginia the

schooner had several secret haunts, and places where certain booty was hidden away until it could be taken to the city and disposed of.

Often Fox would land and go gunning with the captain or Rooke; but he was never allowed to get out of sight.

He would go fishing with some of the men in the inlet and off the coast, and got to know the waters pretty well; but always was he under the eye of some one or more of the crew.

Thus a year passed, and Fox was terribly fretted at the life he was forced to lead, and that he had found it impossible to escape.

One night the schooner was anchored off the coast, but where she could run in to an anchorage in case of a storm.

It was very dark and raining.

At the stern a small fishing-skiff was held fast by the painter, and Fox saw that the tide was running inshore by the way the schooner's stern lay.

He glanced forward and could not see half the length of the vessel in the darkness and rain.

No one was near him, so he drew on the boat's painter until he pulled it close up under the stern.

Then he slipped over the taffrail and in an instant was in the skiff.

To cut the painter with his knife was an instant's work, and the tide bore the skiff swiftly away out of sight.

Once at a safe distance, and he seized the oars, and, listening for the roar of the breakers, pulled along the shore.

For several hours he kept at his work, and then marking a break in the sound of the surf, he knew that an inlet was there.

Guided by the sound he went rapidly in, and soon after was moored along the bank of an island, when, making his boat fast, he lay down, utterly worn out as he was, and dropped to sleep.

It was dawn when he awoke, and he once more pulled on his way, anxious to find some place of refuge.

Pulling out to sea, he again started down the coast, and a few hours after was picked up by a fishing-smack.

He was afraid to say that he had escaped, for fear the vessel might be in league with the outlaw craft which he had left, and so said he belonged down the coast, and the tide had carried him out to sea.

The smack was bound to Norfolk, and took him there, and finding a vessel going to New York, he shipped on her as cabin-boy.

Without accident he arrived in New York, received his few dollars pay for his services, and, fitting himself up, went to the bank to draw a part of his money, and start West in search of the home where he had last seen his sister.

To his horror he discovered that the bank had failed, and he had only a dollar in the world.

Dismayed at his loss and disappointment, he felt almost crushed; but his brave spirit soon rallied, he bought a box, brush and blacking with his dollar, and began to make his fortune as a bootblack.

His polite manner, genteel appearance and bright face gained him many customers; but these worked against him with the street gamins, who declared war upon him.

Those who "picked him up" as a "softy," and undertook to whip him, were treated to a surprise party in each instance, for Fox knew how to take care of himself, and handled his fists in a most scientific manner.

But it was war all the time, and, disliking strife, he drifted to all parts of the city, but always with the same result.

Then he took to selling papers, and here his rivals clubbed against him as a stranger.

But Foxey learned the city well, in the year he was a vagabond by day and night in its streets, and the knowledge served him well in the end.

He did not care to go to sea, for he kept hoping that something would turn up by which he could earn money enough to go West.

He saved his earnings, and had accumulated nearly half a hundred dollars, when one day a gentleman offered him a dollar, and to pay his fare, if he would carry a sachel out into the country with him.

Foxy accepted the offer, shouldered the sachel, and carried it to the boat, which started up the Sound to a small village.

Arriving there Foxey followed the gentleman up to the country inn and received his pay.

The green trees, hills, and pretty cottages quite won the boy's heart, and he determined to make that pleasant village his home for the present, so he became a bundle and sachel-bearer to and from the hotel and boat.

In this way many a quarter was picked up,

and the poor boy became well known to guests and residents as Bright Fox—he was ever so ready for any service.

CHAPTER XX.

WIZARD WILL'S WAIF.

WE have now come to an era in the life of little Fox which was the turning-point for a new career.

Boy in years though he was, he had passed through griefs, dangers and bitter experiences that few men could boast of.

He had become a man in thought and experience, and few were his superior in strength, and none in daring and nerve.

He had seen the ups and downs of life in all that the expression meant, and living there in that little village, he was laying up his money with a noble purpose in view; and by so hoarding, he had become the possessor of nearly a hundred dollars.

"When I get a couple of hundred I'll begin to work my way West to find my sister, for I will so have money and not be a beggar's ould I find her in good circumstances," he was wont to say to himself.

One day a lady and her little daughter came up on the little boat.

It was blowing fresh and the steamer had some difficulty in landing.

It was getting dark, and Fox stood awaiting for some one who landed to give him a sachel to carry.

He had before seen the beautiful and grand lady and the lovely little girl, and he had heard that they, with a handsome youth, rented a cottage on the shore belonging to a New York detective chief in New York.

The lady crossed the plank in safety, but while the little girl was upon it a wave struck the steamer hard, and the end slipped off the dock, and into the whitened waters the little girl was thrown.

She had hardly disappeared amid a chorus of shrieks when Foxey went after her.

He grasped her in his strong arms, drew her from under the churning wheel, and swam around the end of the pier to the water stairs.

In her mother's arms he placed her, drenching wet, but wholly conscious and anxious to make light of her bath to save her mother from anxiety.

But, who had saved her?

No one hardly could tell, for little Fox had glided quickly away in the gathering darkness, and finding that it was known that he did it, and a stir was created, the modest boy went down to New York and remained until the talk blew over about it.

Some time afterward little Fox was seated in the tavern office one night, watching two suspicious-looking men, who were strangers in the city.

He dropped his head over to one side and pretended to be asleep.

Then he heard a plot was on hand between them that meant mischief.

It was against the youth before referred to as the son of the lady whose daughter he had rescued.

Little Fox had seen the youth that afternoon come out early to the village, from town, and recognized a gentleman who accompanied him, as a distinguished police and Secret Service officer of the metropolis, one Captain Ryan Daly.

In fact, it was his cottage that the family of mother, son and daughter rented.

Fox heard the plot of the men to kidnap the youth, catching him on his way to his home, which was nearly a mile out of the village.

He heard also that they had a leader who had come out with them that afternoon, and hearing him referred to as Elegant Ed, he knew him as the leader of one of the worst bands of villains in the city, and who were known as the Land Sharks.

From the talk of the men Fox learned that Elegant Ed, for some reason, wished to kidnap the youth, whom they spoke of as Will Raymond.

He also gleaned that they had made the attempt, when the youth, after going home with the Secret Service chief, had come to the village with his sister for some purpose, and upon their way home they had been approached by Elegant Ed on foot, his two comrades following behind in a carriage.

Unexpected trouble from the stranger, the youth had been felled by a blow, but suddenly the young girl, who had a pistol in her hand for some purpose, opened on Elegant Ed and put him to flight.

Elegant Ed had gone back to the city and left his two pals to rob the cottage, capture the youth, or do as they deemed best in the matter.

They seemed to know that the chief, Captain Daly, was to return to the city that night, and expected the boy to come to the depot with him, and upon his return alone they were to seize him in the piece of woods where their leader had made his attack.

Having arranged their plot they arose and left the tavern, little dreaming the boy waif had heard it all.

Then Foxey arose and sought the depot, and soon after Captain Daly and the youth arrived, the former catching the train for New York.

Calling Will Raymond aside, little Fox told him of the game he had heard, and the two boys at once arranged a plot to get the best of the kidnappers.

Fox put the hat and coat of Will Raymond on, and started for the cottage, pretending to be that youth, who followed a wood-path near.

It was bright moonlight, and seeing the waif, the men believed it their intended victim, and the ruse turned out just as the boys had hoped, only that Will Raymond was forced to kill one of the villains, the other being taken prisoner.

This act welded a bond of friendship between the two youths that could not be broken, and when Fox went to the home of Will Raymond, and was instantly recognized by Pearl, the beautiful young girl he had saved, as the one who had sprung into the waters to her rescue, it made the boy waif welcome in that cottage by the mother and her children, as though he were one of them.

To his delight, little Fox learned a great secret from Will Raymond, and that was that he was the chief of a Boys' Detective League.

Fox had heard of such a band, and had longed to join it, while their young chief, known as Wizard Will, he had looked upon as a hero of heroes.

Wizard Will had indeed won a great reputation as a boy detective, and having accomplished some wonderful secret service, he had been appointed by Captain Daly to important offices.

Organizing a band of Boy Ferrets, his services soon became invaluable to the authorities and recognizing in little Fox a youth of uncommon sense and pluck, he had been glad to make him second in command of the League.

Thus it was that little Fox the Born Guide of Frank Powell suddenly stepped into a position of importance, and as nothing was known of his past, and he said nothing to any one of his former career, he was dubbed by his comrades Wizard Will's Waif.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

IN his new occupation of detective, little Fox, the Boy Wanderer, found genial employment, and he soon became noted as one of the keenest and brightest of the Secret Service band.

He discovered certain expeditions that were to be made, and in "piping" them as the League had to go in a yacht, he proved himself a perfect sailor, and won the admiration of Wizard Will and all of his comrades.

He did much to drive the band of Land Sharks out of the metropolis, and in the end effect their capture; but his cunning work was in dogging the steps of their chief, Elegant Ed, to discover, in a young and beautiful girl living in the city, his own sister.

The man who had so cruelly deserted him upon the prairie, had known all about the inheritance he and his sister were to have, and he plotted to get it, by pretending to have found the children in an emigrant train and cared for them kindly.

He had had the young girl educated, brought her East, and was just waiting for her to reach the age when she was to get her inheritance, when he would bring her forward at the right time, and tell how her brother had been slain by Indians out on the plains.

But all this plot did Foxey discover, and he tracked the man and his rascality to the end, and thereby discovered his sister, which had been the aim of his life, since the day of his walk out of the grand old home near Norfolk.

Another good deed of Wizard Will's Waif was the capture of the Plantation Pirates, though their bold chief escaped.

Still it broke up the mysterious band of marauders upon the coast, and in that did much good.

But to go on relating the good deeds of Foxey, would make a book alone, so having brought him to his just inheritance I must allow the reader to bid farewell for the present to the Sailor Boy Wanderer, hoping to meet him again in another romance.

THE END.

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